

The Beat Within

A Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside

Volume 2-29

See the full mural of Dat Nguyen's "One Life To Live" on page 52

Receiving a visit, no matter if you're incarcerated or not, usually comes as a great surprise, or gives you a great feeling, a change up from the norm, and definitely a feeling of anticipation about the encounter, and the hope that it will be a memorable and joyous time.

Having done this work for a number of years, us facilitators know what it means to most of you readers when you receive a visit from a family member, a friend, let alone a Beat friend/colleague. No matter if you are in juvenile hall, the county camp, a group home/rehab, CYA or in the penitentiary, receiving a visit can truly make one's day. It's a huge break from the monotonous life of your daily program, the ritual of incarceration. It gives one the opportunity to have a taste of the free world from the perspective of your visitor, whether a friend or family member.

We always sense the excitement when our young people get visits from us outside of the workshops. Being let out of your cell/room to sit and chat, to smile, to joke, to educate, it's so nice, we hope.

The visiting party, when not connected to the system in one way or another, faces challenges, too, when it comes to making that special visit a reality for the incarcerated individual. Some places make you come to the location at the crack of dawn to get a number, and then you are told to come back later in the day. Others make you call to arrange a visit, or find out what day your person can receive visits, or if visiting has been cancelled because the prison is on lockdown, etc., etc. Then, once you arrive, what about the long lines of people? What about the traffic getting into the institution? What about the wait? Ah, waiting for your special person . . .

At the same time, you better be up on the visiting guidelines at that institution, 'cause no two institutions are the same. Like in juvenile, some halls have their doors open for visits every single day, while others are only open a couple of days a week. Again, be up on the dos and don'ts of your institution!

The visiting party must also come prepared: dressed appropriately with a valid ID, no contraband, and plenty of change/singles to buy goodies from the vending machines if there are such goodie machines. Again, we'll stress the fact that you need to inform your family about the rules of visiting. It is essential, 'cause if you mess up or fail to abide to their rules, you're shhh out of luck. And think how many folks over the years have been denied entry into juvenile, CYA and prison after having driven miles and miles, or taken a long, long bus ride. Talk about disappointment. Ugh!

Speaking of traveling, visiting an inmate in a CYA or CDC (California Department of Corrections) facility usually requires traveling hundreds of miles, at the very least, an hour-plus, to get to that destination for that very important one-hour (hopefully longer) visit, and that visit might just be a window visit at that!

We at The Beat have been involved in all types of visits over the years, from the one-time, casual, death row visits at San Quentin where you'd sit amongst many death row inmates and their families and associates, even having the liberty to get up and mingle with others, to the visits today where one can only meet that single person in a cage-like room.

We know visits; we know the road to making that visit as successful as possible, be it at CYA/Chad, Preston, New Folsom, High Desert, Corcoran, Salinas Valley, County jail and every juvenile hall we visit.

What inspired this rant on visits was that our colleague, Matt, traveled over the weekend to Corcoran to visit a BWO colleague for one hour. Given what he shared about his weekend journey in the office, we asked him to share a few thoughts in this note, too. He writes:

It is a strange experience to visit a SHU prisoner. It is strange to drive from San Francisco to Corcoran — a distance further than simply the 300 or so miles traveled. It is strange to wait with others in the visiting area, families of inmates greeting each other as they check in for their weekly, or monthly, or yearly visit to their loved one. It is strange to have a guard joke, when I forgot to provide my driver's license number on the visiting form, that next time he would beat me up. It is strange to hear the bus driver (another guard) who is to take us to the SHU visiting area tell a young girl (a daughter of an inmate?) that she had to change her t-shirt because visitors are not allowed to wear that color. It is strange that when my inmate's name was called, another man in the visiting room looked surprised and asked me if I was visiting Michael — how did he know Michael? Was he someone who had ill will towards my friend? It is strange to walk into the visiting room at the SHU and be confronted by the 20 or so cubicles, each with a pair of chairs facing a smudged plastic window and a telephone receiver. It is strange to watch the inmates there watching us — and strange to realize that there is no way that I can imagine how strange that experience is for them. It is strange to be told that I am in visiting booth 19, to see the man standing in 19, a man who I have conversed with for over two years, a man who knows about so much of my life yet who I have never seen. It is strange that he takes such control of the situation, asking me to sit, joking readily, speaking seriously and with great intelligence. It is such a natural, fun, friendly conversation, filled with smiles and sympathy and hope, as if it could have been held over a cup of coffee or on my back porch as the sun set through the fog — and it is even more strange because it is so natural, so enjoyable, despite such unnatural

circumstances. It is strange to see him back up to the door at the end of our conversation and wish me a safe drive as he puts his hands through the slot to be cuffed. It is strange to watch him being walked away by the CO, who is wearing a flak jacket as protection against shanks and projectiles, as I turn and leave to go back to my car and back to the road.

This ed note writer also asked colleague, Michael Kroll, a long-time advocate for prisoners, especially those on death row, to share a few words on visits, given that he's been visiting incarcerated individuals longer than most of us have been alive. He shares:

As the oldest OG in The Beat staff, I have been around long enough to see prison policy change from punishment to rehabilitation and back to punishment. But the one constancy throughout is growth. The monster just keeps getting bigger.

And there is a reason for that. One thing we know for sure is that the most effective prison — in terms of lower repeat crime — is to keep prisoners near the cities from which most of them come, and to keep them small (no larger than 500 people). And yet, what we see, over and over again, are ever more Draconian supermax-type facilities with huge populations far from centers of population.

Why would prison policy ignore every study ever done? The answer, experience tells me, is that there is a short-term mentality that simply doesn't care about long-term consequences.

Lately, we have seen this dramatically illustrated in the American prison, Abu Ghraib, in Iraq. The human rights violations committed there by our soldiers (a number of them former prison guards) could not have taken place if anyone gave a thought to consequences beyond momentary gratification. The long-term effects — loss of reputation around the world, public humiliation, the loss of the "moral high road" as we lecture the world on human rights, and the enraged reaction of a subjugated people — never crossed the minds of those who "got off" on humiliating other human beings.

Thus, in the false name of 'economy,' visiting days for California's 200,000-person gulag have been reduced from five days a week to just two days a week; appointments for death row and SHU prisoners must be made in advance by phone in very restricted time frames, guaranteeing that many prisoners will go without family visits, tearing apart what connects them to us; and prisons are placed in far-distant rural settings, like Crescent City at the Oregon border (Pelican Bay), or the Mexican border (Calipatria), making it even more difficult for the poor — who, after all, are the people we cast into the crucible of prison — to access them.

And, just like our actions at Abu Ghraib, these policies, too, will have long-term negative consequences. And not just for prisoners. The children of those both enforcing the new policies, and those against whom they are enforced, will be paying a terrible price in the destruction of community and the ever-growing use of police power — a police state! But then, that's 'only' a problem for their children and their children's children. And who cares about them?

Wow! There is not much more we need to add this go 'round. We could add thousands and thousands of words, easily, if space permitted, but we now encourage you readers of The Beat editorial note to share, with us readers of this publication, your personal thoughts and observations on visiting and what a visit means to you.

We truly wish we could visit a lot more of our friends in confinement, let alone our friends in the free world, but that's not the case . . . Like putting the selected pieces in The BWO each week, we have to pick and choose who we want to reach out to this week, and for the long term, some of you are luckier than others, while others, well, have what they have, hopefully "more" than "not much," and others have a wealth of support, or so it seems. Isn't this the nature of the beast? Life?

Quickly, don't forget about our editor's-note writing contest. All "favorite movie" pieces need to be in our hands by August 31, 2004 to be eligible for the \$100 prize!

The topics addressed prior to the writing in our numerous workshops were: "What Do They See? — How do you think your family and society view you after you've been locked up for a while? What about your friends? Do you think they still see you as the same person? Do they still love you the same way? Did they lose respect for you? Do they now fear you? Do they treat you or talk to you differently than they used to? What's changed and what will always be the same?"

Our second topic was: "That Decision — We make decisions each and every day, and all of them, big or small, have consequences. We cannot possibly remember every decision we've made, but a few stand out — for better or for worse. Share that decision."

Our last topic was: "I Regret . . ."

As for our POW (Piece of the week) recipients, congratulations writers, and due to space, we suggest you read their incredible contributions on pages 4-6 to find out who gets the POW honors this week!

And finally, this issue is dedicated to all you readers who are anticipating a visit. We hope you get that visit and it's everything you hope for. Thinking good thoughts . . . until next week.

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Book Donor: Marisela Norte

Beat Supporters: The Beat Within greatly acknowledges the generous support of funders of Pacific News Service's Youth Communications Programs – Annie E. Casey Foundation, California Arts Council, California Wellness Foundation, Community Foundation of Silicon Valley, Community Technology Foundation of California, Compton Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Cricket Island Foundation, Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, Free Speech TV, Hewlett Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Louis R. Lurie Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Morris Stulsaf Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Oakland Fund For Children & Youth, Open Society Institute, Peninsula Community Foundation, Richard Rhoda Goldman Fund, Rockefeller Foundation, S.H. Cowell Foundation, San Francisco Arts Commission, Shinnyo-en Foundation, Stone Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surdna Foundation, California Endowment, Tides Foundation, Van Loben Sels/Renbe Rock Foundation, Vanguard Public Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Youth Justice Funding Collaborative, and the Zellerbach Family Fund.

Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center and Log Cabin Ranch School and the Walden House Facility, Maricopa County, Arizona, Walden House, San Mateo, Santa Clara, San Luis Obispo, Alameda County, Santa Cruz County and Marin County Juvenile Halls. As well as Natural Bridge in Virginia, and Hidden Truth in Rhode Island. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at

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Counselor's Corner

From The Beat: 150 Counselor, Ms. Wadud is back to let you readers know what's on her mind. Never one with a shortage of words, she steps up to challenge every single one of you readers to "think!" before you react/act so foolishly, meaning destroying your lives and the lives of others forever. Wow, where would we be without Ms. Wadud? Out of all the counselors in our fifty plus workshops a week, this very special woman is the only one who has the courage to tell it like it is, we love her for that too. She makes The Beat publication that much better!

As Salaam Alaikum

I pray that this piece finds all the readers in the best of health as well as spirits.

To my dismay more and more young adults have been committing much more serious crimes. You guys are not thinking I told you before "You reap what you sow".

When you take someone's life you change the lives of everyone who loved that person. Just think about your loved ones. Now imagine the grief and the chances their lives will face in the event of your demise. Think!!!

All you robbers out there imagine your father, son or brother or anyone that you love walking down the street, minding their own business, and bam! Out of nowhere someone has a knife at their throat or gun at their head, taking their jewelry, rent money, or other possessions, think!! All you ballers and "so called" pimps out there who get fat off the earnings of some young girl, with a young mind who were able to brainwash into believing that you love them and only wants what's best for them, so they in ignorance sell their beautiful bodies to help further your cause.

Now imagine them to be your mother's, or sisters or daughters. Think!! Nothing worth having comes easy! Most of us (humans) would enjoy a life of luxury, be able to afford nice cars, and homes and trips to remote islands to lie out in the sun at will. But we have to work to obtain these things. Stop looking for the easy way out.

Especially when someone is going to suffer or hurt because of your actions.

Remember what you do will come back to you! For real, for real! I still love you knuckle heads and I'll always keep you in my prayers.

Love always.

-Ms. Wadud, 150 Counselor

Life of a Teen

It was hot outside. Summer was finally here. All year, working away in those classrooms, finding job after job, stressing over all of life's little extras: How would I pay for the senior trip? How much money was in my pocket? Where was my girlfriend? — normal things that we all worry about on a day-to-day basis.

But everything seemed to be getting better. It was early May, and I was ready for summer to start. Summer has always been my favorite time of the year, next to Christmas. Anyways, this summer would be great! It was my last summer before I would be a senior in high school. On top of all this, I was ready to become an adult; I was going to be eighteen in June.

I wasn't practicing with the football team this year, due to my back — I had fractured my spine during my JV season. So, pretty much, I would have a lot of time on my hands to make money, and, even better, to spend it. Yet I was disappointed when I knew football had fallen out of the picture. I always thought I would go somewhere with that.

All right, back to what I was saying. This summer was looking good. My parents had finally gotten off my back about working, due to the fact that Applebee's Restaurant hired me as a server. So, I was set: great girlfriend, good job, ready to turn eighteen.

Then, right when it all was feeling right, everything collapsed on me all at once. It was the weekend before school got out, and it was probably the biggest party of the year. I saw all my friends, and people I hadn't talked to in years.

I really just thought of having a good time that night, so I did. And, being there at the party, I drank. Harmless, fun night; just normal kids getting ready for summer, celebrating the end of the school year. And, hell — with the success I had been having lately, I thought I deserved it.

Well, the night went quick, and it was time to leave. I had already downed my last drink several hours before, and I thought I was fine to drive. So, I drove some friends home, and didn't get into trouble doing it. Then I arrived at the house of one of my friends, and he was insisting on going back: "There were still so many people there! Why not just hang out a little longer?"

I kept resisting, saying that I was low on gas; I was tired; I just wanted to go home. But none of these things mattered to them. In truth, I really just didn't want to drive and risk getting caught up. And they kept on: "We'll give you gas money. You'll be home in a little while, don't trip. What's one more hour?" Eventually, I gave in and decided to take them back.

Well, we got within one hundred yards of the party, and there had been a car accident. The roads were blocked, and it wasn't like there was another way in. We were pretty deep in the country, and this was the only road going there.

We stopped and looked to see what had happened. It wasn't nobody we knew, so I turned around and started driving back. As I pulled out, my friends were laughing and shouting at the people who crashed — stuff like, "Dumb ass!" And "Learn how to drive!" But I paid no attention. I was ready to go home.

One of my friend's older brother, was behind us on the way back. He had just left and wanted to follow me, for directions. Well, he began to flash his brights and sped up behind me. Of course, he was just messing around, but it was kind of nerve-racking at the time. Then my friends in the car started shouting, "Lose him! Step on it!"

I started going faster. And that's when it happened. I saw a car turning in front of me, and there was no stopping what was about to happen — I was going to crash!

It all happened so quick, but when it was over, all I heard were the voices of my friends yelling at me, not mad but

scared. What were they supposed to think?

The only thing I could think of, was to check on the other driver. I was not expecting what would happen next. He wasn't awake.

That's when I felt it hit me, about the worst pain in my life — not physical. My mind had been put in a blender and switched to liquefy! And I began to panic, not knowing what to do but to help this young man out of his car.

I picked him up in my arms and carried him to the sidewalk. People were standing all around me, cars pulling over to see what happened. I asked for a phone, and I called 911 for help.

It has now been almost three months, and I'm still locked up. But before you go on reading the rest of my story, I want you to stop and think for a moment, really think.

Ask yourself: How long does it take you to make a choice that can change your life forever? I'm not going to preach to you about doing the right thing. No, that's not going to help. And I know that most of you reading this story, probably don't think twice before some of the decisions you make.

I'm guessing that most of you would have told me to run. Well, that's not who I am. I won't run from my problems. I would stand face to face with the devil if I had to, and wouldn't give up faith!

Because faith is all I have right now. I lost that job. I left my girlfriend. I messed up my family. I lost my license. And someone is in a coma. How long did it take? — About ten seconds, when I decided to get in my car.

But no matter how long I'm here or how badly I'm treated, there is one thing that nobody can take from you — your faith! Today I'm sitting in my bed at Camp Sweeney, looking at life from a different angle.

We, as teens, do not value our lives as we should, because we live for the moment, on the edge of our seats. We should all try to make the best of our lives. You never know when it is your turn to die.

I'm grateful to be alive, to be here at Camp, to know what I know, and to have seen what I've seen. But you see, that night, I didn't get lucky — no, there is a reason I'm not dead. I was put in that car and was meant to be at that intersection at that time. God has very weird ways of telling us things. Sometimes we don't recognize them as signs, mistaking them more or less as just bad luck.

My life was looking good from my point of view, not His. I was living in the fast lane and running with it. I didn't care what people told me. I was stubborn and didn't like to listen. Now I sit here, telling you to listen up! It's almost funny how fast we can flip the script.

I just want you to be thankful for everything, even if you're locked up — the shitty food, the hard beds, the same old clothes, everything. Because it is all happening to you for a reason, believe it or not!

I wish all of you who have read this, good luck in whatever life has to give you. And to all of you readers and writers of The Beat Within, hold on to your faith — one day we'll all be free!

-D-Frank, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your story is so powerful and so tragic, it makes us cry out to heaven; and so inspiring, it makes us cry out again! We do thank God that you're alive, and we also give thanks for your opening your eyes to higher truths and deeper values than the average high school teenager will ever come to see. It is a wisdom purchased at a terrible price, that you now wish to share — not merely in hope of sparing others similar pain, as you might were you speaking at a high school assembly. For you are writing to The Beat, and many of your readers have experienced traumas differing from yours in detail but not depth. And, therefore, you urge them to hold fast to the power of faith, and through that faith not merely remain strong in the face of adversity but make yourself into an instrument of good on earth. You say you are grateful now to know what you know and to have seen what you've seen, because knowledge and vision bring meaning and purpose to life. Thank you for writing your story, and please don't stop telling your truth; for having looked the devil in the face, you are transforming his curse into a real blessing. Keep teaching that lesson to all who are stressing.

Lily Of The Valley

(Dedicated to a mother in her struggles)

Darkness is you pain in the stillness in the wind
Criticized by your family who never cared why you hurt within

Blowing freely while you struggle just to breath
But no one knows the pain of Lily

You suffocate your stems
Leaning away from light
And every decisions made seems alright

Your leaves turn brown
And your petals wither from pain
Your bird is dropping and many forget your name
But you are the Lily of the valley

Valley run deep deeper inside
People step on you high off their pride
You never say a word just blow in the wind
Lily of the valley there had been an end

One day someone will nurture you and you'll grow strong
Someone will see your beauty, Lily just hold on
Roots are your death, not the bud on top
But you have to stay rooted for the pain to stop

-Imay , 150 Crew

From The Beat: Imay, this is a beautiful poem. Beautiful! Are you that Lily? There are so many Lily's out there. Your words are very inspirational. We are breathless. Great piece!

Not Even A Whisper

I made a decision that I would never forget
But can get my mind away

I ran from home
Because my mom was physically
And mentally hurting me
I knew I didn't deserve it

Just because I look like my grandma
I get beat and treated wrong

When I didn't even make a sound
Not even a whisper

The hate I felt creeping in my head
When she told me she hated me

And spat in my face
And told me she wanted me dead
And knows I'm hearing voices

Listen to me
Now you know why I feel sad

-Tears, Marin

From The Beat: We can feel you're really hurting, Tears. Mothers can hurt their children like no one else can. And can you talk to your counselors or someone you trust in Juvy, and figure out a better person or place to live, and not have to go home? Do you have any other relatives who would welcome you into their homes? Good luck and keep your head up.

My Brothers' Unanswered Questions

Why are these streets so scandalous?

Why are friends so shady when they act like they yo' nemesis?

Why did the judge give you all that time?

Do they know you was getting' money
so we can eat on time?

Why do a lot of people hate you?

Why did that one dude snake you?

Why can't I ride wit' you all the time?

Why do you carry that black thing you call a nine?

Why yo' boys don't come visit no mo'?

Why you wear that thing under yo' shirt to make you look swoll?

Why you always lookin' over ya' shoulder?

I know you got license, so you can't be scared of the rollas

How come you always lookin' angry?

Why did Brenda throw away her baby?

Why did they kill 2Pac?

Why is it a lot of homeless people?

Why they lookin' for Bin Laden, but killin' other people?

Why is life so messy?

Why Unc keep goin' to jail?

Why did our people have it so bad?

Who in the world would drive a plane into a buildin' and make it crash?

How come them people had to die?

How come the President not doin' his job?

Why did that bank get robbed?

How come we so broke?

Will we make it in the future 'cause

It seems to me like life is a joke?

-Thinzl Washington, San Mateo

From The Beat: Okay, Thinzl, we want you to put that wonderful mind to work answering some of these excellent questions. We don't expect you to answer all of them, but we think you already know the answer to some of them. Your questions probe deep into our society, exposing hypocrisy, mediocrity, and plain old stupidity! So, we need that mind of yours more than ever! (We are tempted to think, like you, that life's a joke — but it's the only joke we have, so make the most of it!)

I Am Mad

I feel hella mad right now. This is some BS! I need to get out this hell. Right now I don't give a damn about nothing but getting out. I hate seeing people come in after me and get out before me.

People that is getting out is talking about straps and all that kind of BS, talking about, "This ain't nothing," and "This shit don't phase me." Well, why can't the judge see that, 'cause I'm one of the people that is really phased by this shhh. I hate it and I feel that I shoulda already been out.

Why can't God see it in me that I'm a changed man? I don't get down with that gun BS, or none of that negativity. I'm about working towards my future 'cause ain't finna get got and get put back up in here. This shhh might be fun for some, but it ain't cool for me.

I might get out next week, so hopefully the judge will see that I am about to really change. My PO wants to send me to the Ranch but my lawyer says that's BS and I don't belong there. It's a few people in here who are ready to change and go out in the real world. I'm one of them.

Dumbass people is still in here talking about thug shhh and about making that quick money. Like I said before, it ain't about that. When y'all realize that, then you'll be ready to go. If y'all don't like this shhh, y'all better learn that all yo' OG homies don't give a damn about y'all. They say you getting stripes, but you ain't doing nothing but they dirt and riskin' your own ass.

When you ready, you'll be let out. Until then, do ya time.

-Jue B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Jue, through this piece, we can feel your anger, and we know why you are feeling the way you feel. Things sometimes don't go the way we want, and sometimes people don't recognize what we do or who we are, but as long as you know what you want and that you have changed, that should be enough. God will judge you by your deeds, and you won't feel like this always. Letting your anger eat at you will not help, but patience will. We know you really want to get out and you deserve to be out, but have patience, friend. One day you will look back and wonder who that angry young man was that allowed the system to take his freedom. In freedom, you will use this experience to guide your life, to teach your children, to be that person you know you are — good, decent, respectful, and a role model for all. But, for the moment, all you can do is wait it out.

And Then I Met Her

Your happy thoughts — under colored Christmas lights with family... Garlic fries, the uproar of excitement at the ballgame. Or more statistical interludes of media corruption in this illusion called love.

It is the hearts that lust of skin, the movies of bathhouses and political scandals that pressed groping and vaginal juice at the base of a broken condom as love.

My stomach would heat, and she swallowed all the love I had to offer. So dense, so empty, and each night I skip between shadows searching, waiting for something real. Something strong, solid, that would do all but disperse into air with smoky lust and weightless dreams. They were heartless prisoners, blind and beautiful, and clung to every limb, seeking and sinking into endless misery.

And then I met her — young innocent beauty, untouched by the world. Unidentified search, for this Biblical love, unheard of with fairytales and full families. Answered by a girl who knew real love, presidents, friendship, and rummage through thrift stores.

Where should I go, with her? True poise... Anger with peace, emotions and hate, all brought to price check and bagged under city lights, mangling cranes, fast food joints with aged pots of grease that poured stains shaped as my dreams for meaty thighs and endless trains.

So go for it — what could I lose? She was bursting with emotions, flowing tears of joy only long enough to fill a room with molten lava melting my skin, burning my eyes and even on my fourth attempt to escape I realized it was just too warm, too comfortable, not to mention the door was locked. She was as human as I, but was carved with graceful experience like worn leather ballet slippers. All new qualities, aspects, opinions of this so-called love.

I could hear it squeak in the rocking chair as we grew old. I saw lust and passion charred, wrinkled by weary folds of skin as my love held strong. Even now she's gone. I see her in my dreams but the moment I reach for her I am naked in a storm. Slanted back she looks at me, shifting dry leaves with her bare feet on her rope swing.

Like a dazzling panther prowling through thicket and rough jungle vine, clawing through bark and flesh, peeling through the shields of warriors hired to guard my emotions from smiles, and showered intimacy, I'm without defense, pulled into thick waves of brunette velvet, valor, almost weightless in salt piles, damp skin, and fresh ocean breeze. Two, three, four thirty. Sand, cool sweat and warm bodies wrapped in bundles of sheets. I am content.

And to think I am down to this: a vivid imagination and intense narration among ant parades under my bunk.

Useless are my dreams. If once our love like steel was more than gone. Anything after that rusted, tarnish, digging for past treasures with my love shovel left out day and night, from showers through drought, with dried clumps of mud cracked against cement walls and unheard.

Now and then I remember. When I bite into fresh fruit, a ripe orange with cream memories of juice and skin, humid and heavy. All tension, for a moment dismissed, and I am home. Home on hot summer days, running fingers through coarse sand at Monterey, gripping, pulling, urging hidden desires that would not fit through bars. Moist grip, sand soaked, and the harder I squeeze the more grain of pebble and rock sift through my hungry hands.

So I do no more than sit on cold smooth cement, waiting patiently. My mind peeps through scarred glass, against bar reflections and racing clouds, beautiful clouds, so relaxing if only they did not resemble a young woman drifting away through draft exhaust of a confused self-destructing world — ever-changing, growing, loving, learning, never to stop long enough to touch.

The fruits are gone, taste of chalk and sweat linger.

To think of her in this room, helpless and hopeful, it's unworthy. She fills the room with unclear visions of white light and golden flames, too pure. She's fresh powder, free-falling flakes of icy snow brushed aside, but never forgotten because it's still cold.

Even to imagine, just visions, my mind brought guilt. To bring her in my storm is a down-feathered blanket, glowing as bright as icy piles of snow pushed from the porch. A feathered blanket warm with sweet scents, flowers and doves, unmarked beauty wrapped in spice and silk.

No imagination, worthless dreams and sour hopes are gone, pressed tight to my chest to protect thin lives with the outside world to protect her from such an enclosure of scraped paint and fleshy paste pirates, she is worth more.

So I change my dreams, to baked bread, pounding surf, a cloudy mist with buckets of fish on weathered docks. Early in the morning my grandfather cast on jagged rocks amongst gulls and lovers. And now she's back.

With time she is gone, all but her face a still portrait, clear but unspoken for she has moved on without doubt, as will I. But throughout my youth within my dreams she is my happy thoughts.

-Ben, San Mateo

From The Beat: Reading your pieces is like bathing in the vibrant sun on a brilliant beach while the beads of sweat from ice cold beverages caresses our scorching hands, relieving us from the everyday heat of the street tales, crack sales, and glorification of disrespecting females. You strategically place our hearts in the abundance of your magnificent mind, and we enjoy the journey. The girl that inspired this poetic masterpiece must be a knock out — if, indeed, she exists outside your mind. Who is she? We hope she appreciates all that you've artfully expressed to her. Keep on writing those beautiful poems and keep your head up until next time.

Until I Die

I look deep into my mind
So much darkness down in there
So much pressure deep in there
So little life in that place
You can see it on my face
So trapped in my mind
Every thought is so hard to find
I'm stuck by a metal chain
The chain's called pain
The only one who can break the chain
The chain of unbearable pain
Is the grim reaper
The gatekeeper
To my freedom
My kingdom
How I miss it so
You don't even know
And you never will
That makes me ill
For neither will I
Until I die

-Smokey, San Mateo

From The Beat: You explained your deepest, darkest feelings with such effortlessness that we find it hard to focus on the courage it took to write it because it was so well written. However, we know that feeling you describe all too well, so we can say we understand some of what you're going through. We try to look at it like this: If you feel like you've hit rock bottom, the good thing is that there's nowhere to go but up. Life is a struggle between opposites, so you can't have one without the other. In order to have good times, you also have to have bad times, and vice versa. Things won't always be this way. Even if you can't believe it now, the time will come when you'll be happy and these feelings will have just been a memory. Keep your head up!

That Decision

I made a decision that once they release me from this place I am not coming back. I've grown tired of asking staff for permission to do everything. I'm ready to go back out in the world and handle my business.

Being locked up has changed my views on life. It made me step back and look at my life differently. I've learned to respect things more because they may not be there when I get released.

I've worked on changing myself, and I think the decision that I am making is the right one. It's unfortunate it took a place like this to slow me down, but sometimes we have to experience things.

-Diddy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What's even worse than doing things you regret is not learning from your mistakes. It's clear to us that you have learned from yours, and that maybe it took this terrible experience to make you wake up and smell the flowers. Whether it's coming to the Hall or just your own process of growing up, we applaud you for making the decision you've now made, and we expect some fine things from you as you enter the world.

My Regrets

i regret doing
what i did to get here
i regret the day
i got assault-and-battery charges
i regret the day
i got arson charges
i regret how i treated
the people who love me
i regret the day
i came here
i regret smoking cig's
i regret not listening
to my mom
i regret listening
to my friends
i regret smoking weed
i regret lying
to my mom and dad
i regret being rude
to my parents
i regret not helping
people who needed it
i regret living a lie
i regret laughing
at the weak
i regret stealing stuff
i regret walking
out on my parents
i regret taking
my home for granted
i regret having
the bad times i had
i regret living in california
i regret cheating
i regret having the brains
to do the right thing
and not doing it
i regret having
so many regrets

-Brent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The motivation to change begins with realizing you regret the way you were thinking and acting. First regret, then repent — which simply means: change! We see your heart expanding every week. We see you advancing toward a wisdom that will no longer waste your intelligence, or your time.

What They See

First off, I know my family loves me and supports me in all situations. At the same time, I feel that I let them and society down. I think they'll keep a closer eye on me now they say I've committed a crime and been incarcerated for the first time.

If I'm found guilty, I'll be charged with my first felony and society won't forget it. My friends will look at me ashamed. And when they look I will feel the same because being in juvenile is lame.

I'm certain they will love me the same, but respect me a little less because of this big mess. I do not want anyone to fear me, I prefer my friends, family, and society to favor me than to hate me.

-James B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We don't know what you're accused of doing, John, but we can feel your pain, your remorse and your shame. It's true that you've let people down by your actions, but the person you've let down the most is you, and that is what you're feeling now. At the same time, the fact that you are feeling it tells us that you will strive to rebuild that trust and respect, and that you will succeed. Remember, you are much, much more than any single act you've ever done, so don't judge yourself too harshly.

**If I'm found guilty, I'll be
charged with my first felony
and society won't forget it.**

A Piece Of My Mind

Family and society's views and opinions of me as a person after being incarcerated are totally different.

Family still looks at me the same as I see it, and have unconditional love for me. Just because I've been locked up shouldn't and doesn't change a thing for me and my family.

As for my friends, the way they act and feel about me is different after I was locked up. I think that when you get locked up you see who you're real friends are. The way I see it is, if you're friends write you while you're locked up, they are true friends; but if not, then they can't be considered true and loyal friends. The ones that write are usually there for you and love you when you get out. I've found that my real friends don't stereotype or see me different when I'm out. To them I'm just the same old Adric. But some of my "friends" are scared of me or act differently around me. I pretend it doesn't bother me, but I feel like slapping 'em and telling them to kick rocks.

I have also been on the other end of this too. Before I started catching cases I had a couple of friends going in and out of the hall. I never criticized them or looked at them different. I just told myself I'd never end up in the system. But shhh happens, and now I'm the one getting locked up.

I just want to drop a piece of my mind. All the people out there that look down on youth getting locked up, damn you! We're human too, and everyone makes mistakes.

-Adric, San Mateo

From The Beat: This is a terrific piece, Adric. It shows that you think about things, that you have insight into your life, and that you are a kind and decent person. We hope you can apply these gifts of character to your own life, so that you will never again have to write the words, "now I'm the one getting locked up."

It Was My Choice

People always ask me what makes me do what I do.

I ask back, "Why does it matter to you?"

I used to think it was me against the world.

I didn't care about no one but me and my girl.

I didn't know why, but I was living in another world.

That all changed when I got caught up
in the life I was living in which I was brought up.

I blamed my family for my problems,
mad at my pops so I robbed 'em.

I told 'em it was his fault.

I told 'em because of him I was caught.

But I now realize it was my choice.

So now for my lil' ones I have to make a voice,

a voice to tell 'em not to go that route,

to tell 'em to stay in sports to shout.

And with that I'm out!

-Prince Charming, San Mateo

From The Beat: What a great piece! It takes a strong person to take responsibility for an action such as the one you took. If you could only teach your child one thing, what would it be? How will you make sure you stay out so the lil' ones can have a consistent voice? We have faith in your ability to be a good father to your children. Do you?

**I blamed my family for my problems,
Mad at my pops so I robbed 'em**

Life Sucks And Then You Die!

Life is full of problems and fewer non-problems. Most of the time, you have to deal with problems — you barely get to enjoy the pleasures of life.

The only way that I can see so far to enjoy life if you were born with a platinum spoon, not a silver spoon because those upper class people have problems, too. The people with enough money to support other families just have to deal with problems like which car they are going to drive that morning, or what kind of vacation they are going to take for the third time that same week.

I mean, don't get me wrong; I has some enjoyment in my life, but happiness only last so long. I wish I could trade places with Bill Gates and he can take mine. If I were Mr. Gates, I wouldn't have done 75% of my crimes.

Most crimes I did were to support my family some way, either to steal a TV to watch, or to rob someone for their money to buy groceries. If I were Gates, I would buy everyone I know that's struggling some groceries (that good food, too, not that canned food crap), and I would give them some kind of transportation. I'll do something to help out those who also think life sucks.

Happiness is like a meteor shower that only comes every decade or so for me. Well I know I will be happy again, but until then I am still waiting.

When it comes, I will enjoy and remember it, but the fear of losing it is what I am worried about. To those that have been happy or are happy in their lives, more power to you; but to those who are like myself better days will come soon. To those that believe in heaven don't stress on life because if you're good and holy you will spend life after death in paradise, and unlike the meteor shower that lasts for about five to ten minutes that life in paradise is for eternity!

-Young Man, San Mateo

From The Beat: There's a lot of undeniable truth in what you say — wealth doesn't guarantee happiness, but it certainly helps. We wish Bill Gates and the others who have platinum spoons in their mouths could hear your plea (to be fair, he has started a foundation that's given away millions — yes, multiple millions — of dollars to fight global health problems and to improve education in inner cities). (As an aside — why do you think healthy, fresh food costs so damned much, but hamburgers and fries are so cheap?) Why do you think happiness is so fleeting — like a meteor shower — for you? What is it that brings on this meteor shower of happiness? Is there anything you can do to make the meteor showers more frequent, frequent enough so that you're able to concentrate on the joy without the fear of losing the good times? Is there a way to meet your needs without stealing, and therefore forever getting caught up in the system?

From A Fantasy To Reality

Me and my sisters
We're happy as can be
Run around in the yard
And swung from a tree

We shared fun memories
And laughed in the sun
The love we shared
Had just begun

Until that day
I ran from my house
Left them behind
And moved down south

I ran from my house
And robbed my parents blind
Now I'm in here
Looking at time

I went to court
With no restitution
I am getting out in two weeks,
But I'm having some confusion

When I get out
I don't know where to go
Now I'm 18
And out on my own

When I get out
I gotta make things right
Bring everything back to normal
And get back my life

It's gonna take time
But soon they will see
I'm now an adult
And just being me.

-Baby D, San Mateo

From The Beat: Right on, Baby D — we feel the resolve you have to get back on track, but there are some questions we're left with: What's the initial reason you ran from home? Have the underlying issues been addressed? What's going to keep you from running again this time around? What's it going to take to begin to convince your family that you're not going to abuse their trust again? What's it going to take to "get back your life"?

**I gotta make
things right
Bring
everything
back to normal
And get back
my life**

Family Ties

Family is important
 There's no doubt in that
 The way they treat you
 Sponsors the way emotions act
 The way you feel around your family
 And the way they treat you and make you feel
 Is the way you view yourself
 But in reality it isn't always real.

My father is abusive: emotional and verbal
 When he does it, it's degrading and hurtful
 My mother is quite the opposite
 She is persistent, loving, and protective
 The way she makes me feel is loved and wanted
 My two little sisters are watchful and adoring
 From them, I feel like a role model and a teacher
 I try my best to do the right thing for them
 And when I don't I feel disappointed
 And I feel like I let them down
 But it's my older sisters that bring me back up
 By reminding me that no one is perfect
 and how they felt the same
 They remind me of unconditional love
 and that all we need are family ties.

-Trisha, San Mateo

From The Beat: You paint a beautiful picture of your family, made even more beautiful by the support you offer each other in overcoming the challenges that you face. Whether it's dealing with the sting of your abusive family or your own disappointment in your own behaviors, it sounds like your mother, your sisters, and your mom are truly there for one another. How can you aspire to replicate the role your older sisters have in your life in your younger sisters' lives? How can you repay your mom for the love and support she's shown you? What'll it take to be back there with them, supporting and loving them in return? Family is important, and clearly you recognize the part they play in your life — get back out there so you can be with them instead of in here.

**I realize that if I was going to do
 stuff like that, I would hurt a lot
 of families. And I know I don't
 want nobody to hurt mine!**

I Wanted To Be a Hit Man

I have made a lot of decisions — some was bad, some was good. I always wanted to be a hit man, because that was how I was thinkin' when I was young.

But as I got older, I told myself, "Why should I do that? Is it 'cause I need money? Or is that my goal?" Now I really understand why I always wanted to do stuff like this!

As I got older, growing up on the streets of East Oakland, I was always hearing gun shots at night. I was always hearing about and seeing people gettin' killed.

I was always around killas — and seein' how they was gettin' love in the streets! And people will be giving them money for nothing! And that made me want to be a hit man.

But I realize that if I was going to do stuff like that, I would hurt a lot of families. And I know I don't want nobody to hurt mine! So, I've changed my mind.

-Shady Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a great piece, because you explain both your initial attraction to the idea, and your more mature and thoughtful rejection of it. Also, a child hearing gunshots in the night, probably feels safer fantasizing about being the one doing the shooting rather than the one getting shot; we mean, it might be as simple as the fact that when you were a child, it helped you sleep at night. But now that you've grown, you know those aren't the only choices. We advise a career as far away from gunplay as you can take it, even if you still hear gunshots in the night and awaken.

See / Hear / Think / Dream

when you look at me what do you see
 when you hear of me what do you think
 when you dream who do you see
 is it him her it or me
 when you hear me calling your name
 do you see my face
 if you think of you-and-me
 how far do you see
 do you see what's deep within or is it just me
 when i say please do you answer no
 stuck like a ship with no sail with nowhere to go
 i try to dream of better things
 but all i see is shattered dreams
 i try to find love and peace in each human being
 but all i seem to find is rage and hate
 i don't seem to see an end to war
 'cause living in the stomping ground
 all i hear are bullets soar
 use' to be hurt so pain is all i know
 thought to never trust anyone
 so love in me will never grow
 until that day the blindfold is removed
 and i find what i lost
 — my soul
 so what do you see when you look at me
 is all i wanna know
 do you see a man with emotions bottled up
 with fear of letting you really know
 'cause one of the hardest things in life
 is reliving the pain and letting go
 some people say to believe
 zero per cent of what you hear
 and ninety-five per cent of what you see
 because sometimes what you see
 might not be there
 it was and now is gone
 as will i
 just like ghost
 for now so long
 what do you see

-Ben, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We see your soul every week in the pages of The Beat like an angel battering the air on wings of desire, dazed by the war in heaven that first created hell's fire. We hear your words clamoring intensity, filled with light of prayer and heat of curse, and we wonder which feels worse, cold reason's abstract indifference or a fractured heart's secret magnificence. We think you know there is no choice but to face past pain and let it go, hold tight to your dreams and watch them grow into a man — dedicated to being and feeling all he can.

**i don't seem to see an
 end to war
 'cause living in the
 stomping ground
 all i hear are bullets soar**

Just Lettin' You Know

The big homie once told me
that only God can console me
But now I'm sittin' in this jail cell so lonely
He told me that if you need to get there use yo' feet
and if you don't hustle, you don't eat
And get yo' money ASAP
'Cause if you don't check the stats
you might end up on your back
So you better open yo' eyes and see
and the OGs
will always tell you that knowledge is the key
and always be smart, let yo' mind do the thinking
But the way that we going
our mind is getting smaller — just shrinking
But it ain't too late,
yo' life is a hot dinner, you just got to fix yo' self a plate
before it get cold
because our life is untold
On the block holdin' it down for our vessel
Bes' put yo' thinking cap on and yo' vest
It's not a game, it's a test
so what you gone do, pass or fail?
'Cause I know what I'm gone do
I'm gone get out of jail
and always keep it real, never stale
'cause as a young black male
I'm tryin' to prevail jail
as I make these tracks sell
Anyway don't get caught up in the crack sell
or the gunplay
and don't run left, run the right way
And if you don't do nothin'
the boys won't even look yo' way
So keep countin' yo' paper
Be thankful, man
'cause if you don't stop committin'
you gone stay in the "sistam"

-Black Ant, San Mateo

From The Beat: Thanks for taking the time to lace our boots. Thanks for being courageous enough to let these helpful ideas loose. Who do you think should take heed to what you've said in that last piece? Who do you think benefits most from these fast streets? We hope you're taking your own advice because we believe you deserve a great life.

A Bad And Good Decision

To all you young people, I don't regret that I'm having a baby, but I wish I would have waited 'til I was a little bit older, because I know I could have been something in life, better than being in jail. And I'm trying to be an example to my child when she comes in this world so she won't have to sell drugs because she'll have me in her life. And I don't want her to depend on no man like I did.

So to all you young people, think before you have a baby, because it's not all gravy like you think it is. Make sure you have the man you love to settle down with.

I can say I'm having a baby by the man I love. He's named Darryl, and we are going to get married. Our baby name is Lakiya, and I hope he knows I love him. So stay down my young ninja.

-Lil' Princess GU, SF/YGC

Form The Beat: Thank you for writing this powerful, honest piece. We hope your words can make a difference in some other young person's life. What kinds of things are you going to do for yourself and your baby? Will you go back to school? And even though you're going to have to put some of your dreams on hold while your baby is young, it's important for a child to have parents who have positive dreams. What kind of something would you like to be? Tell us what you dream for yourself.

Plans To Life

Most of my time, I sit and strategize of a game plan for my life. Once I'm free from chains, I may have a lot of dreams. But without a plan, where will you go?

For example, you live in San Francisco and would like to experience a couple of days in Cancun. You won't just get to Cancun by saying I want to go to Cancun. You need to find what airline service is cheaper, but more luxurious, right?

Even though white people came to the New World and took it by force from the Aztecs, now known as Mexicans, and captured Africans as slaves, now, in recent times, Aztecs and Africans rose from slaves and fought for our rights. So now people of all skin tones are able to get an education and gain power. It can be political and fight for more rights. But else do we need? A plan!

So, have you noticed a lot of people that do not have an education plan, so fail in all attempts to follow it out? But an educated person that has a plan set, most likely an educated person, will reach his goal. When you are educated, you hold knowledge. Knowledge is the key to success. Right?

-G Man B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We really like this piece, G Man, because it shows some thinking went into it. We think you're on the right track when you recognize the importance of knowledge gained through education. If we have anything to add, it's that knowledge alone is not enough. We all know right from wrong, but that doesn't keep us from doing wrong sometimes. Knowledge combined with wisdom and a sense of morality — and a determination to move forward in a positive way — all those things together give you the key to open those doors. Stay on track, and you'll get there.

So Many Regrets

I regret the day of the crime
I regret buying that dime
Five of my friends sittin' around
Two more beers to pound
After the decision is made
Time to walk and get our money made

First car crashed as we smash the gas
125 mph, fast so fast
Time flying by as we all have fun
It was all fun and games 'til
He pulled the gun...

I regret the night of the best time of my life...

-Lost Fortune, San Mateo

From The Beat: We love this piece because it tells a complete story in a tight little poem. At the same time, we wonder if you have thought about all the possible consequences your night of fun could have produced. If that car crash led to your (or a homie's) permanent paralysis, you wouldn't be writing about the best time of your life. If that gun were used (was it?) and killed someone, you wouldn't be writing about the best time of your life. We feel the excitement that made it so special, but we also feel what is not expressed, and that is what worries us.

**I don't regret that I'm having
a baby, but I wish I would
have waited 'til I was a little
bit older,
because I know I could have
been something in life**

Me Arrepiento

Me Arrepiento porque mi mamá me decía que me portara bien y por no obedecerla estoy donde estoy, encerrado como un perro.

Me arrepiento por no hacer las cosas que tenía que haber hecho cuando, más cuando me decían que no hiciera una cosa y yo terminaba haciendolo.

Me arrepiento de escaparte de un campamento que la corte me mando por unos meses.

Me arrepiento de haber robado cuando me escape de el campamento, sólo para estar unos cuantos meses libres y después haber hecho un delito y que me agarraran otra vez. Ahora estoy aqui haciendo más tiempo en contra de mi voluntad.

From The Beat: Bueno, lo bueno es que te has dado cuenta que por no oberecer estas donde estas. Hay muchos arrepentimientos en ti vida, deberias de buscar la manera de como evitar cosas que te hagan arrepentirte. Es tu vida y la puedes dirigir de la manera que quieras.

I Regret . . .

I feel bad because my mother would tell me to behave myself, and because I did not listen to her, I am in here, locked up like a dog.

I regret not having done the things that I needed to have done, even more so when they would tell me to not do something, but I would go ahead and do that thing anyway.

I regret having escaped from a Camp that the courts sent me for a couple months.

I regret having stolen things when I escaped from the Camp. I regret running away for just a couple of months of freedom, and then committing another crime, and getting wrapped up once again. Now I am doing even more time against my will.

-Carmen, 150 Crew

How I Lost What I Lost!

I lost my pride, my faith, freedom, dignity, trustin' others, my self-confidence — because of myself. I hurt myself really bad and I didn't lose all of this some weeks ago because I ran away from home.

I feel used and dirty because of what I did, because after I did it, I felt ashamed to even show my face in public. And at a certain time during those few weeks, I felt like I just wanted to die because I didn't think that there was any reason for me to live, because I had did so bad — I mean really, really bad, and every time I think about it hurts really bad.

I feel stripped and bare and naked inside! And if I had a choice, I would turn back the hands of time and start brand new.

So if I did start brand new, for one I wouldn't be here in SEF right now! But it was because of two people I lost what I did: because of myself and a so-called wannabe pimp! But now I know not to take that path once again because now I see I can never trust certain people ever again, because if I do my life will be over!

-Shawnda, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: The number of Beat contributors who have gone through the same experience staggers us. How were you able to get away from your pimp and from the game? What advice would you drop to other young women who are being pimped?

Your Neighborhood

You can't walk in the streets of your neighborhood without being scared.

The children cry and say it is not fair,
all because they can't play.

There are mothers out there who do care,
for some fear their children might disappear.
People around here don't realize they don't need to
earn respect by shooting everywhere.

People just don't know how much pain they can
cause.

Can't you be a good citizen who cares what happens
in your neighborhood

And is responsible enough to admit
that you've probably done wrong by not helping
your neighborhood?

Can you stop the violence?

It isn't fair to those children out there.

They look up to you, trusting that you will someday
stop

and realize that they fear their own neighborhood.

There's too much violence out there,
so make your neighborhood a better place
so everyone can walk just about everywhere.

-Eternity, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Eternity, good writing, you really challenge others to stop adding to the negativity in their environment and add to the positivity instead. What are you doing to make your neighborhood safer and friendlier? Are there opportunities for you to impact your neighborhood by volunteering and/or completing any community service hours you may have? It may start with something simple like cleaning up an abandoned property or a park or play area. Keep us informed of what impact you make in your neighborhood.

Stripped Of Respect, Dignity, Pride

There's been a time when I felt stripped for my self-pride and dignity. When I was drinking at an "associate's" house, I was stripped of something I thought that I could never been taken from me. That night I lost a lot of respect for myself and others. I lost a lot of respect and gained disrespect.

I lost "it" by passing out in the wrong place at the wrong time. I don't really remember what exactly happened, but I heard things. What happened is I found out they're not true friends and you can't trust no one, sometimes not even yourself.

That's what it feels like to me to be "stripped." I was stripped of respect, dignity, pride and found out I never had any true friends.

-Camille, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: If we're able to read between the lines here, we're horrified by what happened to you on that night, and it's a testament to your strength that you're able to write about it. How have you taken steps to regain your pride? Yeah, drinking to excess isn't cool, but in no way does that excuse what happened to you. How can you learn to forgive yourself and recognize the dignity you do have, especially when you write a piece like this?

What They Want to See?

Do they want to see a little BG on the floor? Wishing he had to get on his knees praying to God? Wishing the streets put a bullet to his chest, and got him back at church confessing all his sins? Is that what this society wants us to be?

Why is our neighborhood putting the little ones to the ground? But I'm grateful that God put me behind these walls, with a homie too, instead of putting me six feet underground! 'Cause my feet were running on the ground too fast for me to control!

But now I've learned my lesson. Got me missing my family and my girl! But what does the judge want us to be? We're living our lives too fast, not knowing where we're going to end up at — so from now on, I'm out! 'Cause I don't want to see how much the police want us to be put in where it's like we're the meat and they're the true dogs that are hungry!

So now I'm out. One love to all. One love to the boy, Abbas. Wish you good luck in court, just because you're a different race; but it's all good, 'cause you're still a good homeboy to talk to.

A'ight then, Beat, holla atcha! Later. Peace! From:

-Culero, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you see the economic, educational and justice systems as if they act in consciously cooperative unity, all as one; then it might seem like it's just a set up to bring you to your knees. But you need to break it down, and take on each one individually — or you will set yourself up as the next fall guy in this senseless varrio violence that has bullets fly, young men die, and too many do serious time behind drug wars that draw in police as an occupying force. Get out of it. Get an education, despite the obstacles; find a way to succeed, then take that success home to the varrio!

I'm not a bad person

I'm Seen As a Bad Person

First of all, I would like to say what's up to all locked up and at Camp. This be me, Fat Juan from Newark City. Now back to the subject — I know that since I first got locked up, a while ago, people think of me as a bad person.

My extended family looks at it like I'm always up to no good, just because I've been locked up — but I'm still that same person that they all knew before I came to the Hall.

I know my parents love me, and they see me the same way — but other people, like my uncles, cousins and other family members ... my cousins even fear me, like I'm a killer or something!

What they should know, is that I'm not a bad person. Like I put it, "If you respect me, I'll respect you." That's unless I don't really like you, in which case I'll do what I have to do; you know what I mean.

What changed is that some people will see me as different because I've been locked up. They will see me as a bad person. But what will always stay the same, is that my family will always love me, no matter what!

-Fat Juan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know, it's possible for family to both love you and see you as travelling down the wrong path, messing up your life! You say your cousins treat you like a killer, and we believe it when you say you're not — but have you ever heard of "the yet's"? Living by the rules you state above, you're not a killer ... yet! Fired a gun but haven't killed anyone — yet!

Lil' Kids Watching

i'm in a emergency crisis
need help squeezin' my life in
'cause every day i'm fightin'
like tyson but never bitin'
an' smokin' but nyson
ain't helpin' 'cause i'm back
in the hole wit' an inmate
sweepin' flo's up intake
an' sturdy walls
'cause juvenile hall
tryin'a keep me in dirty draw's
but i ain't wit' it
the judge say i got one mo' chance
or i'm go' get it
but being me
i'm back in the streets
an' actin' sick wit' it
i'm out all night slappin' haters
i say forget it
it's betta ways in life of makin' money
than drugs
being lawyers an' doctors
instead of slangin' wit' thugs
let me ask myself a question
is this the life that i want
don't listen an' bein' drunk
steady rollin' a blunt
smokin' purple in public
thinkin' people go' tell me to stop it
but all i see around me is
lil' kids just watching

-Rell Diggidy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The day you're ready to admit, you're the only one can make you quit — the day you're ready to see it is not cool, those little kids watching, wanting to be just like you while you stay out acting a fool — spending half your time on lock up, too — the day you realize that with your brains, it's straight insane not to change — that will be the day. But hey, it's today!

Fifty-Five Days and Counting

Today is my fifty-fifth day being in here, even though it feels way longer than that. The day I came back, was June third.

The first time I came, it was for sellin' crack. They gave me a chance on EM. I pimped it, and still didn't learn from that. So, I was pimpin' EM, gettin' money — till one day, I caught a weed case.

Now they' sendin' my dumb ass to Camp. And now I'm hella mad, just sittin' in the Hall. Every time I wake up, I'm lookin' at walls. But I should be out of here soon, hopefully by the end of this week, sometime in the afternoon.

The decisions I made were all messed up, and I regret makin' them — 'cause they got me all locked up! The money wasn't worth it, 'cause I gave up my freedom!

When I get out, everybody hopes I will change. Me, I know I will — 'cause I ain't going back to sellin' weed and cream.

-Darryl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We have nothing but respect for your thinking process here. You've walked down a path many have walked before you, trying to pimp the system and keep up your drug hustle at the same time. The big difference we feel in your piece, is that you really have learned a lesson from what happened. See you at Camp. You can put your new convictions into practice every weekend (as long as you don't catch dirties or write-ups).

Flip the Script

I sometimes wonder how my life turned out this way! I remember back being young and not having a care in the world. Everything was so much different from now.

I regret doing whatever I did that started my life down the wrong way. I know it started when I was a kid. Now there is no way to turn it all back.

I do wonder if I ever did have the chance to start over — would I do it? More than half of me says, "I would do it!" Yet there is another part of me that says, "What if I started over, and I grow up, and my life turns out almost the exact same way?" It is a depressing state of mind, that I wish I could overcome.

I regret ever turning my life out this way. I want to turn my life around instead of starting over. And right now, sounds about like the right time to do it. I think it is time to flip the script on everybody who thought I would never come out of a life of crime! I want to show them; then they will see.

-David, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You answer your own paradoxical fantasy of having started over and ending up right here, right now, in the exact same situation. Because whether or not that really would happen, the real time and place for doing things differently — is (was, and always will be) right now at the present time! Dig deep, and show everyone, including yourself, who you can be!

After Being Locked Up

I'm not sure how my family and friends will view me. A lot of the homies will have the same respect, if not more.

A lot of my family and friends will see me as the same person — but that will change, as soon as I'm not the same person. They will see that because I plan on going legit, no more slangin', no more pullin' licks!

Some people already know that I'm going to be a different person, just because of the stuff I be talking about on the phone and writing in my letters.

I wouldn't say that they will love me the same or less after being locked up — if anything, they will love me more! Because they ain't seen me in hella long!

There are some people that fear me, simply because of rumors that they've heard, and the time I've already done in the past. And there are some people in my family that talk to me different already, because they have always seen me as a drug dealer and a criminal.

A lot of things have changed and are changing, but I ain't trying to talk on that. The way I see things and think about things, will probably never change. But a lot of things are open to change, because the way I've been doing things has only been getting me into trouble.

Well, I'm out. Stay up, don't stress the small stuff.

-Crazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you know the Serenity Prayer? "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." We've seen your courage from the beginning — but we've also been watching you grow in serenity (peace of mind), perhaps as a result of your growing wisdom and understanding. It's been a privilege and an education to read your writings. Props.

**I'm still the same
person. I ain't never
going to change;
even being locked
up, I'm still going
to be Hanna!**

Dead Sinner

the pain of being
away from my family
won't stop

i feel like my blood
is being poured out
to the very last drop
the pain —

i can't explain
it's a burning sensation
maybe i feel it
'cause i'm a sinner
and god won't deliver
me from temptation

i would love to
become an angel
and finally grow my wings
but i think i grew horns
because i love

materialistic things
i'm all alone in the world
and i'll die alone too
at least i think so
i don't wanna have to
take you

i'm constantly contemplatin'
about what should i do
organizing the homies
having a rendezvous
choppin' it up
thinking about my very next move
so basically getting back
to my family —
i'm screwed

-Lil' Gato, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's not like if you can't be an angel, then you must be a devil! You just need to make some changes and start living on the level. You're not alone in wanting all those toys in your home — the entire US of A is the world's prime materialistic zone! You don't have to be robbin' to get some, but you choose to stay mobbin' and ignore each lesson. Here you are feelin' pain that's just your heart's message to your brain — stop acting insane! Timed out from temptation, the sick thinking's still racing.

No Change, Unless For the Better

My family views me the same after my being locked up for a while, because I'm still the same person. I ain't never going to change; even being locked up, I'm still going to be Hanna!

I don't care what my friends think, 'cause they ain't gonna faze me — whatever they say or think is just gonna make me a better person! But ain't nobody gonna lose no respect for me because I was locked up — they already know I respect myself, so they have no choice but to respect me.

I'm gonna talk to people differently. Why? Because I've learned to respect people more than I did before. I really didn't change though, I just changed my outlook on life. And I've learned not to trust people like I did.

I always say, "Don't change unless it's for the best." So I won't change unless it's for my own best interest! (RIP Jeremee)

-Lil' Mama Hanna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We see that your spirit, your pride and your self-respect remain unchanged. However, we've noticed that you do talk to others a little differently, with more respect — it used to seem like you were angry all the time and ready to fight. You're still afraid of no one, but neither are you starting trouble. You know you have our affection and respect. Change for the best!

It Ain't Me

what do they think they see
 they think they see a dumb ol' girl
 that ain't gonna be nothing
 but that ain't true 'cause i ain't dumb
 and i'm gonna be something
 they think they see a girl
 that can just have babies
 but that ain't true
 i have babies because we need more
 people that can do something positive
 in this negative world
 that's why i have babies
 what do they think they see
 they think they see a girl
 that just can run from her group homes
 but that ain't true
 'cause i'm gonna stay this time
 and try to do good at my group home
 all they see is a girl
 from the 'hood that's some bull
 but to keep it "treal"
 i wanna get older to pay my bills
 that's keeping it "treal"
 when i can pay my own bills
 what do they think they see
 they think they see nothing but trouble
 i don't want to make the same mistake twice
 'cause i don't want to do my time double
 what do they think they see
 they think they see a girl
 that's gonna be on drugs
 that ain't gonna get no love
 when really i just like to grub
 and not just be looked at like a thug
 what do they think they see
 it — ain't — me

-Me-Me, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We only get worried about you, when you start seeing what they do. So thanks for setting us straight on what's really real. But you need to know, it's not just paying bills — it's also what you do to get that pay. 'Cause when you go out and get it the wrong way, you just might be getting played — even if it's just you playing yourself. Chase that wealth, but don't risk your health or your self-respect. Work for that legitimate paycheck. Meanwhile, hold your head high and continue to try — to do right!

From the Heart

My mom don't want me in jail, locked up, because she needs me at home with her. She wants me in school, so I won't be locked up.

My friends do not know I am locked up, 'cause my mom didn't want them to know. I think they see me the same, but I don't really know what they think or see because I am in here and they are out there. And if they don't see me the same, I don't really care what they think — because they are not doing the time, like me!

If they lose respect for me, I won't respect them. And to me that means we wouldn't see or talk to each other, period. But I don't think they will fear me just because I've been locked up — everybody I know been locked up before. So, no, they won't fear me.

I don't really know if my friends will change in the way they see me, but I know some things will change. I will change, but my heart will remain the same. 'Cause I'm the only one that can make myself change — it has to come from the heart.

-Kevin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Keep your heart clear about all you wrote here tonight. 'Cause your heart knows that whatever got you here was not worth the time you're doing. As you point out, your friends might not understand, 'cause they didn't do your time.

How Could You Love

what does love mean
 how could you love somebody
 that you don't even know
 what does love mean
 where does love come from
 how could you tell
 somebody that you love them
 sometimes you are not able to say
 how you feel to the one you like
 you just sit up there and wish
 you had something good to say
 to the one you love
 but you just don't know what to say
 it's hard to express how you feel
 but it's like your tongue is caught in
 something and you can't get it out
 sometimes people look at me and what i do
 and they think that i can't love someone
 i am a young man but i can love
 and i do have a heart
 this is why i wonder
 how could you love someone

-Joshua, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like you're saying that it is so very hard to express your feelings to someone you care about, call it like or love or whatever. That's entirely different from these players who talk about love, but just fake it, thinking they can take it from someone else. Expressing genuine affection can make you feel vulnerable; awkward, embarrassed, even scared. Yet wondering out loud, as you do here, is already an example of you expressing your heart! Don't ever stop!

A Bad Reputation

I regret being in here, because I make myself look bad. And I'm just making a bad reputation for myself that does not look good on me, because people will look at me differently.

People will be like, this guy is coming in and out of jail — why should I hang around him? He is a bad role model. But not exactly. Because they could also look up to me, like — he learned from his mistakes and he knows better now.

People might think, "He just made the wrong choice. Now reality has hit him, and he has snapped out of it. Now he can start out new and let the past be the past."

From this day on, I can look towards the future and make better choices. It may sound too good to believe, but believe it. It's true!

-Vongphachanh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've got it now! What troubled young people need to see as a role model is someone like you, who has "been there, done that" — and then, like you, got himself together to make better choices in life.

**I will
 change, but
 my heart
 will remain
 the same**

I Do an' I Don't Have Regrets

i live a sick life
of drug dealers and violence
gunshots
no silence
rats roaches and sirens
i live a sick life
of ohgees that spit so real
air force white t's
living off turf meals
i regret a lot of things
i probably do need help
i don't regret packing weapons
and protecting myself
i got future plans
where i'm from don't know
what's next
i got some things that i do
and i don't regret

-Young Dee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem is so tight! Paints a big picture in a few short lines! But you do need help in your thinking, so you can help yourself stop sinking. And the best way to protect yourself is not with a gun, but eject yourself from the drug-dealing violence where you come from. Replace your sick life with some get right.

Regrets Behind the Scenes

behind the scenes tears
flow from my eyes that no one hears or sees
so behind these things
peers fear for me
behind the scenes i feel remorse
with hurt people i build rapport
see i imagine things that not too many see
so what i cover up remains behind the scenes
regroup the fantasies
recoup my dreams
my regrets fall behind the scenes
powerless feelings run laps
around my mind like a marathon
my regrets are everything
that i bare feelings on
enraged is easy to feel
but hard to touch
i guess i drop my guard too much
but regrets continue to flow
fast like mountain streams
my regrets touch me
behind the scenes
mom's disrespected
not in my wildest dreams
but my love for her
behind the scenes
and neglect is found
when there's maybe no one
to protect the growth
when a baby was young
my shield is hard
but my feelings are seen
no more shall i regret
behind the scenes

-Troy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In recovery, they say, "You're only as sick as your secrets." And: "Secrets lose their power when exposed to light of day." So, when regrets are kept secret, hidden and unnamed, they stay mixed up with feelings of guilt and shame till they erupt in the form of rage; or else keep us chained to the same old sick thinking that perpetuates our pain. The beauty of your poetry is matched only by its vision; your poems witness intelligence blossoming into wisdom.

I Regret Telling My Mom I Loved Her

I regret telling my mom I loved her
And even trying to touch her skin
All she does is look at me with a grin
Which I've never done
Not one sin
But when it came to foster care
She told me she cared
But when I came back
She almost broke my back
Now here I am with a child
Taking so good care of her
Like I never got treated before
I don't regret her having a face of me
'Cause I know I'm pretty
And my child is, too

-Tears, Marin

From The Beat: If your mom is abusing you, can you take your child and find somewhere else to live? You sound like you're a wonderful mother, and need a chance to raise your baby in peace. What about an auntie, a grandmother, can you and your child live with them, until you finish school, get a job, get your own place?

Tired Of This Place

I'm tired of this place
I wish I could vanish without a trace
Thinking of a great escape
It's like there's a slash in my cape
Acting like I'm superman
Thinking of a master plan
'Cause this life is breaking me
And this world's forsaken thee
All these things are making me
Go to the edge of insanity

-Eric, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: Good metaphors, Eric. So, what's this master plan? Who/what are the villains and allies in your superhero life? How are you going to fight the evil to carry out yo' master plan to stay out?

THE
BEAT
WITH
BABY

You Might Just Be

all the things
i been through
all the things i've seen
i grew up thinkin'
i was rough and tough
seeing things every blinkin' moment
now it's like i'm sinkin'
to the bottom of the end
i'm thinkin'
and sendin' my prayers
up above
pretending to love
myself and others
and acting like
i have no bothers
but having nothing but hate
for another
— then you
come along
they say you can't
love someone
if you don't love
yourself
but see the way
you make me feel
is like no one else
what you say
brightens my day
and makes me want to
change my ways
and stop gang bangin'
because if you keep making
me feel the way i do
and keep on with all
the deep things like you do
you might just gain
my trust
and prove i can love
and not lust
it's a chance
you can steal
my heart from me

-Kristina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Two very positive things are going on here at the same time, and they both are more than fine. That you've found someone whom you are beginning to trust with your feelings, is straight great (and nothing like "stealing"). But quit the gang banging on your own, 'cause it's the right thing to do — not only for the one you're beginning to love, but also for you! Otherwise it sounds almost like a threat instead of what it is, a important step — toward physical, mental and spiritual health.

**what you say
brightens my day
and makes me
want to
change my ways**

The Decision: Questions And Answers

People make decisions without noticing what the consequences are. I have made a million decisions, but I made a bad decision recently. I decided to go party, runaway and do drugs rather than just be at home kickin' back knowing I'd be happy and it would be cherry knowing that my family and boyfriend would be okay. But by just taking off for a couple days, I ruined a perfect relationship with my boyfriend, family, myself.

I ended up breaking my boy's heart, hurt him, and scarred him for life! I ended up hurting my mom and dad and lost their trust for the millionth time. I ended up feeling horrible and looking horrible, for what? Just to have a high, or fun, for two days, to make what? Your so-called friends happy. But what do you get in return? That's the question. My answer is an unhappy heart.

-Karla, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: Sounds like you've learned a valuable lesson, Karla. What do you think you're going to need to do to prevent an unhappy heart in the future? What will you do to mend the relationship between you and your friends and family? If you were in their place, what would you want to hear/see?

I Hold The Pain Close

I hold this pain close,
Now my future seems so clear,
I'm held back by these bars,
My mind's suppressed by my fear,
My only enemy's myself,
And these times are getting harder,
A lonely white boy,
Who watches hope sail on farther,
My anger overwhelms me,
But I persevere and move on,
Can't seem to get a grasp,
The answer was there all along,
Now I'm stuck in this cycle,
Over and over I fall,
I keep askin' myself,
Why I even care at all.

-Chad, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: You say your future is clear. Tell us what you see in your future. Tell us how you deal with your anger while you're incarcerated. What is the answer that's been there all along? Will it help you break the cycle? Will it help you maintain hope?

**I regret not doing the things in life
that mattered,
the real important things.**

All My Mom Ever Did Is Love Me

I regret breaking my mom's heart, time and time again. All she has ever done is love me, and I continually let her down. As I've grown older, I've begun to realize just how much she loves me, and when I think of how I have done none of the simple things that she has asked of me, I feel like a failure.

I regret not doing the things in life that mattered, the real important things. In reality, my mom is my world, all I need, all I want. She has given me all I've ever needed and wanted, and my biggest regret is never reciprocating in that relationship.

-Jerod, Marin

From The Beat: What simple things did your mom ask you to do, Jerod? Is she raising you alone? What can you do to help her, when you get out, without her even having to ask you to do? Get a part-time job and help with the rent? Wash the clothes? Cook? Wash the floors? Dishes? Get good grades in school? Can you make up for the past?

Where Could Love Be?

Could it be down at the bottom of the sea?
I've been lookin' for love day and night
But I can't find it. It seems to be outta sight
Could it be that I've been lookin' for love in all
the wrong places?
Maybe it's not the right time, let's just face it
Sometimes I wonder if love is even real
Maybe it is, but why is it something I can't feel?
Anyways, I have to go
Someone is knocking at the do'
Could it be love? I don't know
But I hope so

-Lover, Marin

From The Beat: Do you have friends whom you love? Often it's someone who starts out as a friend, that one day you realize you love and who loves you. What about your neighbors? Kids in your class at school? Sporting events? Remember the song, "You Can't Hurry Love"? That means it comes when it comes. Don't worry about it. If a special person showed up in your life, would you be ready?

You Don't Know Me

You don't know me so quit actin' like you do
All you see is a ninja in jail who only mess wit' few
Like Player, Green, Black Ant and Sug Shane
Them my real patnas who goin' be down wit' a ninja man
Through thick and thin and through it all
When I get my money the whole knucklehead click goin' ball
That's real talk. People say they know but they really don't
They think they goin' get the chance but they really won't
'Cause people stay judging a ninja by his looks
They think 'cause I've been in jail I'm a real crook
I ought to write a book
Nine times out of ten you goin' be hooked
'Cause I got a mouthpiece, oh you didn't know,
O yeah, you don't know me so leave it at that. Whoa!
You don't know me ninja!

-Taeda-Tae, San Mateo

From The Beat: It sounds like you were talking about somebody in particular. We hope it's not us because we don't know you, but we'd like to. What is something that nobody knows about you? You don't have to tell us, but it's an obvious question. How does it make you feel when someone acts like they know you, but they really don't? Don't trip, we don't like that either. At the same time, it's a two-way street: Do you think you know us (individually or collectively), or are you doing what you hate, judging others by their covers, or falling back on tired old prejudices?

Why did I walk so far down the road of hell?

A Puppet

What's life in jail? Family that ain't livin'! All I need is a string attached and I can be a puppet.

Why a puppet? 'Cause I'm 18 years old bein' told to walk with hands behind ya' back, don't speak in line, ask for the toilet. Damn. I mean ya' fakers right here need ta get it right and keep it right, right?

This ain't life. I wanna live, not exist, but live. I wanna travel the globe, and jump out of planes. I've got plans. My mind is set. I know where I've been and I know where I'm at...

From the beat within me, peace.

-Freddy, San Mateo

From The Beat: All right, you know where you've been and you know where you are, but do you know where you're going? And, even more important, do you know how you're going to get there? Tell us!

I'm Not Proud Of What I Did

I regret taking my first hit of bomb (weed)
Puffing and puffing
That day my life changed
Not for the better, but not for the worse
I regret the day I lied to the popos
And then they found my pipe...
And the day I got drunk with my friends in the city...
Got so angry
And headed towards her house...
This is where my life changed for the worst!
I was mad and I wanted to fight my girl
And I drove without our guys and found her...
I grabbed her out of the car by her hair
After my girl tricked her to get in...
That's the day I most regret
I saw her face and what she looked like...
Bruised head to toe, she had head trauma,
scraped face, etc.
I'm not proud of what I did...

-Amparo, Marin

From The Beat: Beating up your girl is hideous. Why did you take out your anger on her? You have no right to hurt her for any reason. It sounds like you've learned a lot about yourself and are honest about yourself. That's a good start. Good luck in the future and we suggest that you find a way to control your temper before you find yourself in an even more messed up situation.

They think 'cause I've been in jail I'm a real crook I ought to write a book

Drowning

I'm drowning in my sorrows
I can hardly breathe
I feel like there's a knife that keeps
Stabbing the back of me.
My body feels so numb
My legs begin to go weak.
I'm a helpless child
That has got in too deep.
The path is unbearable
I don't know how to cope.
Why did I walk so far down the road of hell?
Nobody knows
Nobody can tell
But when they look into my eyes
They become breathless themselves
I'm finding my way back now
I think somebody's coming for me

-Brooke, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: We hope you find your way back. Do you need somebody to help you find your way back or can you do it on your own? Are you waiting for somebody to come help you, or are you actively looking for a person that can help you? What's brought you to this state; what made you keep walking?

Letting God Down

I regret the day I did my crime 'cause now I'm serving time.
 I regret making my mother cry and I wish I could wipe away the tears inside.
 I regret not listening to my father's words, seeing the blazing fire in my world.
 I regret stressing my parents more with the incident that leaves my heart torn.
 I regret leaving my fiancé behind, knowing that she'll always be mine.
 I regret leaving behind loved ones, those who haven't left me alone.
 I regret the first day I was arrested, knowing my life is being tested.
 I regret the fact of being a disgrace and wish I could change my face. I regret
 my pride and my stupidity and I have lost all clarity.
 I regret all the days I let down God and turned to sin to be my mob.
 I regret ever turning my back in our Heavenly Father,
 the One who shows me more mercy than others.
 I regret letting down "the One" from above,
 the only being who has shown me true love.

-Alfred, San Mateo

From The Beat: Did you have a relationship with God before you did your crime? How will that relationship give you the power to resist whatever temptations come your way the next time you're on the street? What are the changes you see in your life in the future? (Regret is useful only if it provides a light towards a better future.)

Now You're Gone

you're gone now
 lost to the streets
 we were just chillin'
 kickin' back
 drinking some old 'e'
 now you're gone
 i didn't believe it
 i thought how they gonna
 run up on my homie
 like tupac says
 you live by the gun
 you die by the gun
 i wish it wouldn't
 have been you
 rest in peace jay jay
 one love homie

-Baby Gurl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's so painful to lose a loved one to gunplay — confusing too when you're trying to change your ways. Stay clean and stay out the street scene, in loving memory of Jay Jay, and maybe another homie will change before it's too late! RIP Jay Jay.

Image Of Me

My mind cannot explain what it is thinking of . . .
 Images it has with a girl I know that looks so happy.
 All alone, lost in her own world of peace.
 She looks around and can see her dream
 in front of her, so beautiful and real.
 She has the power of great life, alone . . .
 not one person to see her walk with strength
 and courage.
 Imagining in her soul, in the very corner,
 how much it hurts.
 But the dignity in her makes her feet always be able to
 walk through loneliness, despair,
 and everything that follows.
 A wonderful sight and gorgeous sounds
 that her ears hear of the beautiful voices she carries.
 Her walk is so godly.
 Her smile is everlasting.
 How can one heart be so happy?
 Long black hair shines in the light.
 Different looks, she's so beautiful.
 On the royal stage she shares her talent to souls
 who are willing and love to hear
 as she notices every eye she looks in
 has a dream and happiness, just like she does.
 Images of a real dream.
 What I think when my mind is set free.

-Jay, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: You paint such vivid images in this piece, Jay. Who are you thinking about? Is this a picture of how you desire your life to be? This sounds like someone who has come through difficult circumstances to a place of peace and satisfaction with herself and her surroundings. How can you move closer to personal peace in your own life? We hope you will continue to set your mind free.

**We don't even need to
 make love
 But I'll treat you like
 a woman when we do**

Will My Love Ever Stop?

Will my love ever stop?
 Why do I long for your touch?
 Will these walls ever barricade my feelings?
 Will you ever feel what I do?
 As long as you can stand by my corner
 I'll make you happier than anyone else can
 It's not easy to express myself
 But for you nothing is impossible
 I would rather die than see you with someone else
 But would live just to see you again
 We don't even need to make love
 But I'll treat you like a woman when we do
 I'm baffled by my passion
 But it makes sense to love you
 It's going to be a minute before we're together
 But I hope you'll love me more when we meet again
 This is dedicated to the woman of my dreams
 The woman in my dreams
 That makes me wish I never woke up

-Vamps, San Mateo

From The Beat: This was a perfect example of how a poem doesn't have to rhyme to be tight. We really enjoyed reading your proclamation of love for this lucky person. Not often do we hear anybody with a penis saying "we don't need to make love." But when you say it, we understand it to the fullest. What about this person allows you to focus less attention on sex? Is it her mind? Her personality? As we write this response, we find ourselves becoming curious, so if you can, let us know.

**All alone, lost in her own world
 of peace.
 She looks around
 and can see her dream**

Head Up

When I get released
they won't see me the same
because I know myself
and I ain't the same.
Being locked up for a year
made me insane.
I know it's part of the game
and my mom's probably ashamed.
When someone ask where is your baby boy Shane,
no reply,
tears running down my mama's eyes.
Just the image of that
eats me up inside.
I know that my girls won't see me the same
because I used to have cheese,
but now I got to get in dirt
up to my knees.
Just get cheese
because I fell hard
and it's not that easy to get back up.
Now it's a test to see who my real Rogues is
by helping me get back up.
But if they don't
I'm still gonna stack up.
I can't wait to see how my girl's
gonna be loose or stuck up.
But no matter how they treat me when I get out,
I'm still gonna have my head up.

-Suga Shane, San Mateo

From The Beat: We really felt your pain — how much it hurts you to see your mother cry. What it reveals about you is your capacity for compassion. How will you keep your head up when you get out and somebody pisses you off? Will you keep your mother in mind during these situations? How do you know?

Lonely Nights

I sit in my cell
And think about my life
Fourteen years old
And sleep outside on lonely nights
I thought weed was the way out
But when I'd come down off my high
All I had was doubt
Stole money to get happy again
Only to find a new path to begin
The road of destruction
But I'm 'bout to start reconstruction
To find a new path to start
How about in school
Get back to the charts

-Young Shhhy-E, Marin

From The Beat: What do you want your new life to be like? What makes you happy without drugs? Do you think getting back in school will help you accomplish whatever dreams you have for your life? That sounds like a start! What other dreams do you have? Why are you sleeping outside in the cold? Does your family lock you out? If so, what for? Will your family let you come home, when you're out of Juvy?

Looking for change,

Wishing for better days,

Now is the time to make it happen.

Me . . .

I am what I want
I am myself,
Not what someone else wants,
But only myself.

My mother says be like this
Some people say be like that
But I just say
Be like what?

I don't want to be mean
I don't want to disrespect
But how can I tell them?

I can only be me.
I know I'm in a gang
I know I cause some trouble
At times, I might be in a fight
But in life, I tend to stumble
No one's perfect.
Right?

-China, San Mateo

From The Beat: We think you're right — people do make mistakes and stumble. But we also think that those who heed good advice stumble less. We sense the pride you have in yourself in the first few lines — we like that you are what you want. But we're guessing that you don't want to be locked up, yet here you are. Is it possible that the gang may be another instance of someone else telling you what to be?

Life Is What You Make Of It

Life is what you make of it
I was once told when I was young that,
Growing up is part of changing your ways.
Life is what you make of it.

It has always been a struggle for change,
But only you can make it happen.
Life is what you make of it.

Selling drugs, posted on the corner,
Because you feel that, this is the only way
To make money, life is not only a game,
Life is what you make of it.

The future is what's real,
Plus you know where you've been
But understand without a plan,
Where do you see yourself in the next few years?
Life is what you make it.

Nobody can stop you from doing what you want
Desire and faith is really all you need to carry on.
Life is what you make of it.

Looking for change,
Wishing for better days,
Now is the time to make it happen.
Life is what you make of it.

-Sean, San Mateo

From The Beat: We feel you, Sean — growing up is a process during which you change your expectations and actions; the struggle to change is largely on you; life isn't a game; and now's the time to make it happen. The only questions we're left with are what are you going to make of your life, and how are you going to make it there from where you sit now?

How My Life Went From Good To Bad

My life went from good to bad
For a minute I was happy
But now I'm just simply sad
I had it pretty good, my life was perfect
I tried to stand strong with pride
As my situation worsened

I was on the top of the world
I had a job and went to school
Making money on the side
You could say my life was coo'
I had a roof over my head
And my kitchen is full of food
It doesn't make any sense to me

But it just might to you
I think about it daily
How a bright future suddenly turned shady
I stood up directly in front of the judge,
standing and waiting
With a look of pride so proud
I vowed no matter the situation
I would never let them bring me down
Still some would say I'm blessed
But I would say I'm cursed
My life was getting better
When I came to the Hall it became worse.

-Fresh, San Mateo

From The Beat: Damn, this is sad and powerful. You describe something that so many others feel but aren't willing to admit — that while others look at the way you stood proud and tall, you feel yourself shrinking inside. What will it take to get back on the "life is getting better" track? How can you use the pride you have to help you get back to seeing the better life, instead of making a bright situation shady? How did you bright future turn shady? You are blessed — blessed with the power of self-examination. Hopefully this insight can lead you back to where you want to be.

What Makes Me Smile

My fiancé makes me smile all the time
and boy is she oh so fine.
She lifts my spirits when I'm down
and I'm always happy when she's around.
I miss seeing her beautiful smile
'cause I haven't seen it since my trial.
I long for her comfort, love, and support,
something I never received at court.
I lost my smile when I got sentenced
and I want it back, just to mention.
Some time has passed, and I've learned to live on,
to see the days go by, longing for a new dawn.
But when I finally see my girl
I'll run my hands through her curls.
My smiles are coming back to me
and I'll soon be home.
Wait and see.

-Alfred, San Mateo

From The Beat: This is a beautiful love poem, Alfred. We think that new dawn you're longing for is right around the corner, but it's up to you to move in that direction. When you're back home and smiling again, don't forget how you felt in here so that you won't ever be tempted to risk coming back.

Death

Death
This is something that comes and goes
Like tha wind
It takes away your friends and foes

Death
It has made me suffer
Too many loved ones have passed away.

Death
It makes tha past and future fade away
Like night and day

Death
Is something we fear, yet accept
Regardless if you're well kept or not

Death
Our loved ones are taken
And a lot of times forsaken

Death
A nightmare that haunts everyone
There is no safe haven from this

Death
It's like a dark abyss
There is no way of telling when this will end

Death
It takes away before we get a chance to make
amends.

-Pockets, San Mateo

From The Beat: This is a powerful meditation on death — the last line gives us chills. There's no denying the points you make, but there's seems to be an unwritten line running through it that death is around every corner. There is so much you can do to live before dying, to live a full and healthy life until death comes to take you years down the road. We're not talking about living life by avoiding all risks — that's not really living — but by calculating risk, and most importantly, only risking for that which is truly important. What will it take to truly live before death comes for you, so that when it does come you don't have to make amends?

**Stop da hatin', papa chasin'
And rise up in dis nation and
give our kids an education**

Quit Hating

It's time to get ready for da next generation
Stop da hatin', papa chasin'
And rise up in dis nation and give our kids an education
Stop da ghetto corruption when everybody been'
frontin'
Show dem it's nothing —
Oh no! Look whose coming
Mona I know you hear her or seen her
Much love. Mona, I'm Done.

-Mona, San Mateo

From The Beat: The message you spit is loud and clear, and we couldn't agree with it more. How are you going to rise up? How should we rise up? What will it take to stop the paper chasing and start the educating?

Living Out Our Young Life

Living out our young life is not as easy as a lot of people think these days. These days, we have gangs and violence, guns and drugs. Young people can wake up one morning and die by the afternoon. Some change their lives and become good working men and women.

People think our lives are easy because we have free schooling, help in our schools, and people we can ask questions to. Asking questions does not always help you through the day. Once you leave the school, you are in the streets and no teacher can help you there. The streets is another word for drugs, guns, and death. Drugs are everywhere, even in elementary schools young boys and girls are doing drugs and dying because of them. I've seen young men die because of gang violence and don't even live to see their 18th birthday.

I know people that have changed their lives just to be better people and make a difference in their lives. I just hope I can change soon.

-Gordo, San Mateo

From The Beat: We agree that living out a young life isn't easy these days. We'd go a step further and say that living out a young life is hard enough without gangs and violence, guns and drugs entering the scene. How is it that some people are able to change while others get taken down by the streets? Is it possible that there's another type of support that would help you, or even one that exists and has helped them, deal with the life of the streets? What do you think it will take to make the change to become a better person and make a difference in your own life? The insight you show in writing this piece shows us that you have the tools to make that change.

Good To Bad

My life went from good to bad when my dad went to jail

They separated
A lot of fighting
Went back to jail
Got deported
He's in Mexico now

When I was ten, my dad went to jail in Redwood City for about seven months. Then, he got out. My mom and dad tried to get back together, but about four months later, they broke up. My dad went to a house and rented a room.

My sister and me lived with my mom. My sister and me stayed at his house every weekend. When my mom and dad were together, my sister and me were happy but my mom wasn't because there was too much fighting and a lot of arguments. After my mom and dad separated, my dad went back to jail in Redwood City for eight months and then San Quentin State Prison for about three years. I didn't get to visit him during the time that he was in San Quentin State Prison, but I did in Redwood City. After he did his time, he got deported to Mexico. I haven't seen him for almost three years.

I live with my mom, my sister, and my mom's boyfriend now in South San Francisco in an apartment. I think that my mom, my sister, and me are better this way, even though we still miss my dad. The end.

-Sad Son, San Mateo

From The Beat: It wonderful that you've been able to find a sense of peace with your mom and sister, but we feel how much the absence of your father hurts you. Are you still in touch with your father? Do you have hopes that you'll be able to go see him, or that he'll return someday? How can you get back to the outs and be there for your mother and your sister?

Confused, Lost, And Pain

Four months and a half down the drain
I'm livin' the life of a gangsta female
In this world and community
My mind is goin'

Insane

My thoughts and feelings
Are all mixed up

On the unit, females think I'm gone
But really I'm hella sad in my heart

And fed up

Of all this pain I go through
Even though I had time

To rethink my issues

I still wanna run, too!

Lightweight upset because

I know my homegirl gon' run

Back to da town

Where she feels dat's where she belongs

It ain't coo' 'cause I'm set trippin'

Off what I might do

Two more days to be exact

Is when I come to the decision

To eitha' stay true to da game

Or maintain and come back

To dis' hellhole!?

I'm confused if you ask me

Dat's real talk

And my heart says "Come back"

But my soul ain't sure

Now I may not make sense

Of what I'm sayin'

I'm jus' speakin' my mind

And I know in the end

I'm gon' be payin'!

Dis is for you who be runnin' all da time:

Be wise and

smart — make right decisions!

Learn from yo' mistakes

Aight? Dat's real talk. Till next time —

aight. Down. Late . . .

-Lamei, San Mateo

From The Beat: Man, Lamei, there was a time when we couldn't even get close to penetrating below the front you were throwin' up — in this piece, you pull the mask off and come with the pain. We hope that you don't run, that you don't continue to string out the tale of your life in the system, instead coming back and dealing with the time you've got. How can you deal with the anger, sadness, and confusion you feel? What will it take to see that there's a better, brighter day ahead? What can you do to bring your heart and soul into agreement?

Change Yourself

What's up Beat? Me nothing, sitting in the max, trying to get through this time. I've been here 7 months on the 5th of July.

Since I've been in here, I've been trying to change. Change is good, some say, but who knows? Me, I'm trying to get myself ready for when I do get back out there. I think everyone should work on themselves. We all got to face these streets some day, so why not be prepared.

Until next time stay up.

-Diddy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We think whether change is good or not, it is inevitable. Everyone changes. The question is how, and how much direction and control you exert over those changes. How are you trying to ready yourself for the streets? If you look back to the day you came to the Hall and today, how would you say you've changed?

Clumsey's Emotions

All my emotions build up inside
I don't know what to do
Or how to feel
'Cause it feels like a tide

As my eyes start to get wet
The drip down my cheeks makes me feel like it will let
Me express and let go of all the pain
that has built up in me . . .
Slowly I feel myself fall to my kness
Pray to God that He will — Please! —
Let me be free . . . free from all the hate and greed
Now I see how it really is to be me
Stuck in this body of mine . . .
Having thoughts and memories that I just wanna
rewind.

-Lamei, San Mateo

From The Beat: You've come so far in your ability to express your emotions — so far, in fact, that the faucet seems to have been stuck on open for the last few weeks (and we're glad for that). Why do you say that you're "stuck in your body"? Is your body starting to feel like a prison, instead of an extension of what you're feeling inside? How do you think God will free you of the hate and greed? What part can you play in freeing yourself? What caused the pain that has built up inside you? When the tide comes, how can you make sure you're not swept away?

Different Views

I believe while you're incarcerated, all family and society takes different views upon what happened, how you've changed, and how they perceive you as a person.

From my experience, my family views me as the same person but they say I'm more of a calm and mellow person, which has brought a tighter relationship to us. In the aspect of school, I have to transfer as my name and reputation has been smeared, which most likely means people I knew young and old view me differently or maybe as a criminal.

But to the people who really knew me, nothing has changed. They know who I really am and forgot about my dealings in the juvenile system. And from this ordeal people have come to fear me because of what happened. But I'm starting over, somewhere new and I could care less about how the people of my old community and society think of me, because I know for myself from this event I've done nothing but mature and become a better person to my family and to those whose care for me which is all that really matters in my life because in the end is the only people who really care or count in the end is your family and friends.

Society could care less.

-Anonymous, San Mateo

From The Beat: It's too bad you did not put your name down, because this is a good piece. It is not really important how people view you, what's important is how you view yourself. How have you maintained your sense of yourself as a good person while your name's been smeared and your life has been changed by how others view you? How has your relationship with your family grown stronger? What about this experience has made you calmer? How will you go out there and establish a new, positive reputation for yourself in a new environment?

What Do They See?

What do they see?
They see me happy, they see me sad
What do they see?
They see me doing things that are bad.
But if you really wanna know
I don't give a rat's ass!
What do they see?
They see me drinkin', they see me smoking
What do they see?
They see me wishin' and they see me hoping
For a different direction than the one I'm going
But no matter what they see
I know that their love for me
will always be the same
And I'm not the only one to blame!
What do they see?
They see a lot of things changed
My attitude, behavior, and even my name!
What do they see?
I don't know what they see
But whatever it is, I'm always gonna be me!

-Ko'na, San Mateo

From The Beat: So what do they really see, or what should they see? Is that really who you are they are seeing? What are the ways in which you've changed your attitude and behavior? How are the changes going to affect the way you're going to live back on the outs? Is the changed you the one who's going to continue "doing things that are bad," or is it a person who's heading in a different direction?

I Regret

I regret this, I regret that
but what do they see —
a black on the mat calling for help
Then I ask
why don't they help
instead of just keeping me in a cell?
My family see me as good
they see me as bad
but really I'm just sad —
and for the record, what they think
I don't give a rat's ass
I did bad decisions that I wish I can go back over
but in reality I'm only getting older
so it starts right here
and when I change my homies are going to think
I'm a queer
but I don't really care
'cause life ain't fair
so let me do my thang and you do yours
I'm still trying to change
and I know I can't go into the past
so let me try to do the best I can
and get on with my life
so I can survive in this lifetime
My real homies is my family
So I hope, I hope
I wish, I wish
that this life I live will get dismissed
Alright Beat.

-Ju Nut, San Mateo

Form The Beat: You're very right, your real homies are your family — even if they are not your family, a real friend will not lead you towards trouble. We're glad to hear you say it starts right here. Where are you going to go from here? Since you can't go back over your old decisions, can you learn from them so you don't make the same mistakes again? What is the change you seek to make?

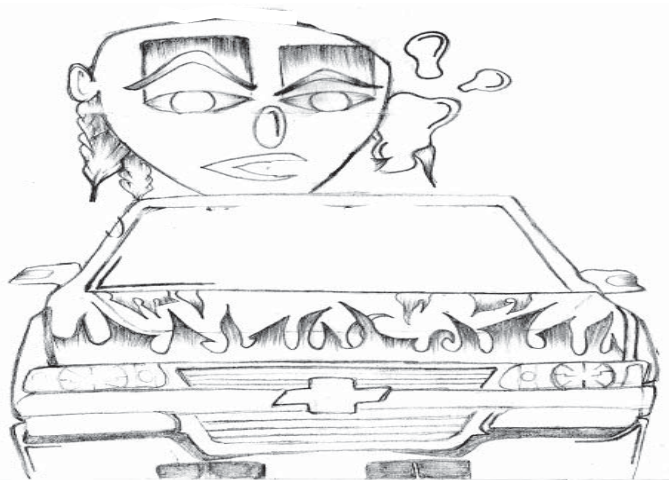
The Gang Life

I hate the gang life
It really ain't right
People dying each day
They can't see the way!
Although I'm not in a gang
I can see the gang's ways
They took my friend's life
Without shhh to say!
I wish that that night
Would've never came.
He was eighteen years old
And in a dumb lil' gang
I can't believe they took his life
But now I see the stupid gang life
I was with him that night
Then ten minutes after I left
They already took his life!
R.I.P Vicent (Chente)!

We love you Chente!

-Lil' D, San Mateo

From The Beat: Lil' D, it is always sad to know that a close ones' life has been taken and there is nothing we can do. We feel your pain through this powerful poem and we hope you will keep it up. How can you encourage others — especially those who may seek revenge for Vincent's death — to lay the guns down before another series of lives is lost to the gun (or to the Pen)? May your friend Vincent rest in peace.



My Mother Sees Me As Another Person

I think my mother sees me as another person. The reason I think that is she never thought she would have seen her oldest and only son locked up in jail. She still loves me, no matter what, and she's going to support me whenever I need support.

She lost a little respect for me, but not all. She will never let me stay in the house by myself, because I guess she might think I'm go'n steal something.

The decision I made was big, because I decided not to ever steal again. I regret the reason I got locked up.

-Javon B1, SF/YGC

From the Beat: Do you think that because you know your mom will support you no matter what, that you do things that you wouldn't dare do without her unconditional love? Do you think you're taking her support for granted? Are you taking advantage of her, and hurting her, by risking going to Juvy by what you do? Is your mom right? Would you ever steal from her? Do you have the right to take something someone else earned? We applaud your decision never to steal again, and know that you have some work ahead of you to restore you mother's trust. We also know you can do it.

We Do The Time Together

The question for today is "what do they see," meaning other people looking in on your life.

After you have been locked up for a while, the only people that really care about you doing your time is the people who did the time with you mentally: your loved ones who write them letters, the people who get up early in the morning to wait for your court dates.

It's your girl or baby mama in some cases who has to make sure her phone is on at the time you call. It's the girls or baby mamas that got to go get them stamps to get them letters out to you to show their support.

If this question is not asking what them people see — meaning the mothers that come out to see you, the few fathers, and the girlfriends you left out there — if the question ain't about them people, I don't care what other people see because they have not done the time mentally with me.

-Leek B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You're right, of course Leek, that those who love you suffer right along with you when you're locked up. We hope that others who read your piece feel what you're trying to say, and think about those that truly love them, and what is owed to those people. We hope that you, too, will feel your own words the next time you are breathing free air, so that you can build on your own experience, and never come back!

Being In The Game

Being in the game
I ain't never felt no shame
On the corner daily slangin'
It's the dope manual messin' with my brain
I do it so I don't got to deal with the pain
I'm strugglin' with
Take my life like a ball
and start jugglin' it
Not knowing when I'm go drop
so I continue to pop
(and smoke trees wonderin' will I make it to the top)
But the devil says I'm not
so why should I try
(or is that just him tellin' me another lie)
So instead of getting my hopes high
I go do another drive by
And let time fly
because I ain't in no hurry
So don't worry
Then drop my crates
In San Francisco's Cali state
because that's where I'm from
and where I did my first drug run
Picking up a gun
OGs telling me to have some fun
But look at me now
I'm locked up thinkin' about
all the dirt I've done

-Lil' Turk B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There is a lot of information about your life packed into this tight poem, Lil' Turk. But we wonder if you aren't finding rationalizations — making excuses — for your own bad choices. Why try, you ask, if the devil is making you do bad things — which is a way for you to keep doing them! Smoking trees to forget the pain won't lead you to the top that those same trees make you wonder about! Giving up on yourself so that you go do "another drive by" leads nowhere but to the slavery of prison, or the freedom of death! We'd prefer that you pursue the freedom of life!

The Beat Within

I think that the decision I made really affected me because I could've been at Job Corps right now doing my thang. But I chose to run the streets selling dope with my comrades, not caring about what going on around me.

But you know what, Beat, it's up to me to make nothing into something, ya feel me. Every decision you make has consequences, so you have to be ready fo' anything. But for the most part, I wish I never made the decision I did.

The past is history but the future remains a mystery, nahamean. Later on in life there's going to be decisions you gone have to make, so to all of y'all out there, make sure you don't get caught slipping again making the wrong decision that you already know where the road end.

Zoomungus is back. Stay up everyone in tha hall.

-Zoomungus B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Well, Zoomungus, we're not happy that you're back in the Hall, but we are happy that you're still writing positive things for your peers — and yourself. Everything you wrote is true, so our only question is this: Will you able to follow your own excellent advice once you get through this low point? You have a lot to give the world, so we pray you don't throw it all away in a moment of weakness.

A Mind Like Mine

You'll never find a mind like mine

A mind that's two steps in front of me and one step behind

You'll never find a mind like mine

Think all the time, my mind, my mind

My mind steered to crime, oh my, oh my

My mind one of a kind, my kind, my kind

Free from binds, my mind, my mind

You'll never find a mind like mine

-Deep Speech B5, SF/YGCF

From The Beat: Ah, Deep Speech, you have a refreshing style all your own. We're sure you're right, that we'll never find a mind like yours, but tell us more of what's in that unique mind of yours. We know how deep you are (in speech, and otherwise), and we were overwhelmed by your Coconut-Strawberry play which explore some of those deep issues. Now, spell it out for us in The Beat.

Seeing And Being Anything

My name is Angelica aka Jelly. I'm from Oakland, CA. Growing up in Oakland is like living in a big-ass project. Living in Oakland, you are capable of seeing or being in anything at any age.

I went in the system at the age of 13. When I was 14, I went to my first group home. I was in the group home for eight months. My first six months I was doing real good and was on the highest level.

Then I went to jail for the first time for three weeks. After I got out, the system started trying me like I killed someone or something.

Now I'm back in jail 'cause I cut from my group home 'cause I was sick of the BS. What I'm saying is, don't mess up 'cause once you're in the system, it's like you can never get out!

-Angelica GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a good piece, Angelica, so good we want to hear more. What do you mean when you say, "Living in Oakland you are capable of seeing or being in anything at any age"? Explain more about what took you from the group home to the Hall. Good writing.

The Beat Within

Yeah what's up Beat? It's me, Zoomungus I'm back. Lately, I've been catting off in tha unit.

But anyway, the thing I really regret is when I was ditching school and thought it was cool smoking weed and getting at girls. I really regret that. I think if I would've applied myself to go to every class, I would've already graduated when it was time. Now I have to study more and work my way back to getting my HSD.

What I really regret is running tha streets with big bro' and my cousin. Now I'm locked up 'cause I wanted to sell dope, stay out late and party, instead of doing my homework at my house. I wanted to make money like my big brother 'cause no one likes being broke, and that's a fact.

I wish I woulda stayed in school when I had the chance. I mean I still have a chance to go back to school, but yeah, Beat, that's what Zoomungus regret tha most. I think that if I would've never started getting high, all this would've never happened to me. So that what I regret tha most.

-Zoomungus B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It always gives us a pang of pain to see anyone returning to the Hall, and this is no exception. We can understand your regrets, as long as you don't use those regrets as an excuse not to do the things you should have done already — namely, get your high school diploma or equivalent. One of the things that marks adulthood is knowing when you have to postpone pleasure temporarily in order to do what needs to be done. The younger you are (in mind as well as years), the harder it is to make those connections. You're old enough (in mind, as well as experience) to know what you have to do. Will you do it?

Affecting The People I Love

What I regret is not seeing that sooner or later I was going to go down.

I tried to take so many precautions, such as not smoking weed or anything else, not getting so drunk that I cannot control myself, or popping pills on my spare time.

I took these precautions so that if anything was to happen, I can get out my own way, and be thinking with a clear mind, so if I have to duck down and save myself or somebody else, it would be possible. When I see homies all on the set without a clear mind, I just told myself that is not going to be me stepping like that. Or if I had to fly through the city fleeing or making sure one of my homies get to the hospital.

With all these precautions, I still ended up doing some time. So I regret not taking enough precautions to keep me away from jail. I also regret not listening to my girl when she told me "everything you do, does not only effect you but it affects all the people who loves you." I say I regret that because that what really hurts, seeing my loved ones affected by what's going on with me and my life.

So those are the couple of things that I regret.

-Leek B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We appreciate all the things you didn't do so that you wouldn't be caught up, and so that you could keep a clear mind when a clear mind is required. At the same time, it seems like you didn't keep your mind clear of everything. In other words, even though you gave up those things that could lead you into trouble, you still ended up here. So, there must be more that you need to do, or not to do. Will you be able to do that "more" when you walk out of here? Precautions are important, but if you're doing things that give the system the power to strip away your freedom, then you have to do more than take precautions.

Do Something With Yourself

I will have to get a job and get out of jail and get a life and get out there and do right by my own self.

Go do something and be a positive man! An' be influenced by a positive man, leading the way to responsibility. Get a girlfriend, or just be you. Because you're not all the same! But we all just got to hang on, myself too, and just go do right. Because this is a lesson. So just be ready to learn.

Anyway, do right and go get a job. Okay? I would like to see people succeed in life. So do something with yourself, just to do it — and just do it! Because it's not fair for some of the young men out in Oakland. Out here everybody's dying. And that's just how it's going to be unless you do something with your life.

So I am going to do something with my life. I am going to pray every day from now on and ask God to help me. And I ain't go' let you down, God!

But I just want to tell you that wherever you go, do right — be influenced by a positive man leading the way to responsibility. I just want a better life, don't you? So get a life, guys. It ain't easy to just be out here and there, so I am going to do something with my life.

I ain't really got nothing else to say. Just do right by your dad and mom and grandmom and brother and sister — and everybody that is important to you!

So just do something right by your own self, but do something! Okay, I don't got nothing more to say. That's all I have to say about that. The end.

-Johnathan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel you on this one. We've all seen enough killing and dying in the streets of Oakland. And the truth is, even if you're only standing on the spot next to someone that's hot, or you're out in your white T with blue jeans and you look a little like somebody else — you make yourself a target. But get a job and you're off the street, away from that fatal heat, and making your pay at the same time the right way. As you say, get yourself a girl or not, but dedicate your life to doing right under God. Do your part — and you'll be blessed by your own upright heart.

I used the system for my education!

On The Bright Side

But on the bright side, since the system used me — I used the system for my education!

So, they' keepin' me here and I'm causing hell — the legal way! And they' hatin' me because I'm doin' shhhh they didn't expect me to do, and I ain't just wildin' out, goin' dumb on they' self.

So I suggest you ninjas do the same and get ya education, because that's something they can't take from you!

Boy, I'm out with a dedication to my boy, Lil' Vell. Do ya program and a good one at that, boy! So we can do it big, boy! Love ya and keep ya head up.

-Howard, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You don't have to go big overnight. If they hate you for doing it right in here, imagine what you can do when you're out and in the clear. Forget the floss; become a boss the right way — so you can be a boss to stay (with no "time" to pay).

They See Me Here

My family sees me here, and they feel bad. They get angry at times, because I am here at Camp and can't be home with them everyday, only on weekends.

I hate the fact that the judge didn't let me go to Mexico on vacation with my family this past weekend! Everybody thought that I was going! When I heard that I couldn't go — I felt bad! I felt disappointed.

But that's what I get! Like my girlfriend says, "You did the crime. Now you have to pay the time." I hate it, but it's true.

I called her on Saturday and told her that I couldn't go to Mexico with her and my family. She had thought I was going! But no, I couldn't have my dream come true.

I hope that she gets back soon, because I miss her every day that goes by. Well, everybody, stay up! And learn from your mistakes, because it's your life that you're messing up.

-Krushier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Even we were disappointed when we heard you couldn't go on your family vacation, but we're proud of how well you handled the situation. So many people at Camp, when they feel hurt by this or that decision made by the judge or whomever, get so upset that they lose control and end up hurting themselves even more. Keep your head up. You've got a lot to live right for.

All The Things I Regret

i regret cutting school sometimes
smoking black an' mild's
weed — staying out late
when my mother wanted me at home
i regret being in juvenile hall
when i'm supposed to be
at home taking care of my sick mother
cleaning up for her
watchin' my little brother
i regret doing what i'm not supposed
to be doing and that is fightin'
getting into lots of trouble
when i know and not just
me knowin' but my friends
and my family all know
i am a good kid
i am locked up
for something i didn't do
i got to fight it an' ride it out
and that's something i regret
i regret cursing around my mother
when i was fourteen an' fifteen
it's about time for me to put this
to an end — so don't
make the wrong decision
like some of us did
you'll feel bad about it
you'll wonder how moms feels about it
and that's a bad regret

-Craig, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Maybe readers who won't take it from us, will take it from you — even just hanging around the edge of wrong-doing can get you screwed. Here you are serving time and facing charges for something you didn't do! But you're right to see through to how you set yourself up for what you now must fight your way through. Stay up. Be coo'.

I Regret

i regret ever
going to juvenile hall
i wish i was free
so i could ball
i regret ever
catching a bootsy case
now i can't keep
o p d
out of my face
i regret pimpin'
broads and takin'
their dough
'cause i'd die
or kill if my baby
was a ho'e
i regret slappin' girls
puttin' my hands
on women
and hopefully my
daughter will get treated
like a woman
i hope seriously
that i won't regret
doin' my time
and stayin' in camp for a bit

-Tydialmighty, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your daughter will see in her father a man who learned from his mistakes and came to understand, if you admit to mistakes and make the changes you need to make — you can reshape your fate, for love's sake.

no man or woman

should live in the past.

**Turn your life over and live in
the present and the future.**

I Regret, I Regret, I Regret

I regret that I'm in jail, but I have to move on and do better.
I regret the way I treated my mother when I was out, but when
I get out I will treat her like a mother is supposed to be treated.
I regret that I sold drugs almost my whole teenage life,
but I am going to turn it over and get an excellent job.
I regret that I'm going to CYA but I'm going to look at it
as a way to get personal help for getting my GED.
I regret that I put streets before home.
I regret — I regret — I regret —
But no man or woman should live in the past.
Turn your life over and live in the present and the future.
Give your life to the one and only God.

-Danario, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Naturally you don't want to go to CYA, but when you look back on what you will have accomplished there (getting your GED and maybe earning a trade certificate, too), you may end up thinking it was exactly what you needed to do.

What I Regret Most

The one thing I regret most, is ever coming to this place. Also what I regret most, is committing the crime I did.

Even though I didn't really mean to do what I did, I am paying the price. Even though the whole thing was not supposed to happen, now I'm sitting here, locked up behind these walls, regretting every moment of it — just praying that I get sent to Camp.

Today is the twenty-seventh of July, and I find out where I'm going in two days on July twenty-ninth. I'm just hoping for the best, so I can be with my family, taking care of my priorities.

The main thing in my life right now, is my daughter and my future wife — taking care of them; and making sure they have everything they need; and making sure no hurts, harms or dangers come to their bodies and souls.

And one more thing I regret, is not going to school when I was supposed to, because now it's going to be a little harder to get my GED. But I'm still going to get it, so I can get a good job. I'm not going to let this strike they gave me, get in the way of what I want to achieve!

Well, it's about that time to end this letter to The Beat. So, until next time — I love you, Gabriella and Maressa! Bye.

-Matt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We don't know all the in's and out's of your case, but if anyone could benefit from going to Camp; we'd have to say it's you. You are right to pursue that GED, in order to get a better job to better help your family. Just keep that positive attitude, do what you need to do, and you'll come through for all three of you, wherever they send you! Props for what you're choosing to do.

Warrior

i am broken
here i lie
on my face
about to die
nowhere to turn
one thing left to do
i lift my head
and look toward you
i cry out to the one i cannot see
lord i offer to you what's left of me
i pray you hear my plea
without you what can i be
you have a gift
some say it's free
but i know that's not true
to obtain it
i must die and live again for you
i was scared to do that before
but now i fear no more
so here i am on the edge
openly i make my pledge
i will only live for you
i will heed your advice
i will only speak what's true
i'm a living sacrifice
oh jesus my savior
you died for me
crucified on the cross
your blood set me free
and i find myself in love with thee
i stand to my feet
i'm a new creation now
i taste your love so sweet
to no other will this vessel bow
i look around with new eyes
i can hear the world's cries

-Telefaro, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your words of sweet repentance lift heaven's sentence from your heavy shoulders. Jesus not only died for your sins, he lived his life forgiving them — he tended to the suffering until he sacrificed his life to those who practice might makes right. Now you know, only love can make you whole; and the tyrants' power that will pass in an hour, cannot touch your soul. Keep your head up, you're nearly home!

Pretty Lady

my lil' boo boo
is one of a kind
the only female
that stays on my mind
even in the dark
she still gon' shine
far from ugly
but so damn fine
sometime she's
hard-headed
so i gotta smash to
keep her in line
but it's nothin'
'cause a good woman
is hard to find
she even got
a good heart and
wanna see me shine
but i wish life
had buttons so i
could push rewind
so i wouldn't be
lonely now and
serving time
but now i got
to get mines
'cause i miss
waking up with her
to watch the sunrise
and like lil' flip
i got my sunshine
so i'm layed back
like a seat reclined
r m c you're in my
life now and i will
never leave you behind
i ain't gon' even front
another love like you
i'll never find
so stay solid for me
and keep ya head up
i love you — bozy

-Emmy-Boe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel the love and we're sure she will too, but what's this talk 'bout smashing on your boo? That's no way to do. Let love do your persuading for you. She's your partner, so no keeping in line, just side by side — no front, no behind. We wish you all the best in your next step. And don't forget to write.

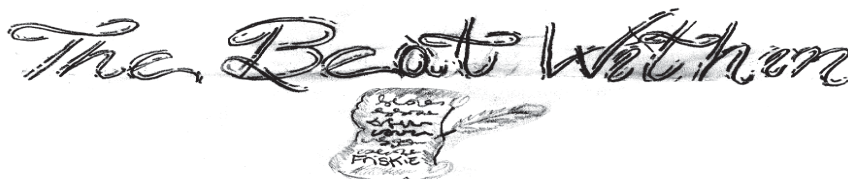
**I regret letting the
almighty dollar
control me enough
to rob that man
of his monthly
income.**

I Regret...

I regret
the day I raged on some chick at school and got arrested
I regret
the day I stole a man's thong for my friends 18th birthday as a joke
I regret
Holdin' that pipe up to my mouth and flickin' that lighter and
inhaling that dank
I regret
Not comin' home for days just to get high and drunk
I regret
The times I took advantage of my "freedom" on the outs
I regret

-Bubbles, San Mateo

From The Beat: We appreciate how directly you took on your regrets, and now we're wondering whether you'll learn from them next time around. When you get out, will you simply add to your regrets, or will this be the end of the list?



To Deal With My Anger

Here some ways to deal with my anger:

By talking to someone when I feel upset or frustrated with something or someone.

I just have to learn to be myself and stop trying to fight over people's business and learn to have self-control and stop giving people the power to get me mad and go over board with things.

I just need to get involved and let some of my energy go because if I keep it bottled up I'm just going to keep bouncing off the walls. So if I just concentrate on one thing at a time my anger will be just.

-Jeremy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're not sure if you meant "just fine" or "just." Either way — it makes sense. You are a really smart dude. Anyway, talking to someone when you're angry is a really good idea. Also, when you feel that anger creeping inside of you, take some deep breaths, don't react off the cuff, think first, take a walk, do whatever is essential so that anger doesn't explode into chaos. Good luck

I Regret...

I regret ever sticking my toto in that girl.
I regret pulling the trigger on that weak ninja.
I regret being born because I am such a menace to society
I regret selling purple to that lil' kid.
I regret letting the almighty dollar control me enough to rob that man of his monthly income.
I don't regret that I feel the love God has given me and the chances He has given me.
I regret not receiving His word when I was young.
I regret leaving the blessed house of my grandmothers.
I regret letting peer pressure catch me my first case.

-Elijah, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you regret doing somethings, that can only mean that you won't be doing it again, right? How can you remove the label of being a menace to society? How can you make sure that you don't continue to allow the green to control your life? Lets hear your plans for your future!

If You Love Someone Don't Ever Stop Loving Them

The only person that treats me different now that I've been in the Hall, is my brother.

The thing about this is, my brother had been to jail for something he didn't do, and when he got out me and my other brothers loved him just the same. When I came home he looked at me like I was one of these ninjas off the street. So I ask him, I said, "Why you be lookin' at me like that?" and he said, "I don't mess with criminals."

So from that day on I never look at him like a brother again, because the way I feel is, if you don't like me then I don't like you. But a few weeks go by and I start feeling bad. I miss my big brother. He started feeling the same way.

So we both sat down and told each other how much we loved each other and played a couple sports and went back to being brothers. I asked him why and he said he just wanted me to change.

-Rico, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Rico, it must have taken a lot of courage to tell him how you feel. It's so nice that you can talk to your brother on that level. He obviously has a lot of love for you, and you for him. Make him, your family and yourself proud! Communication is the key to any relationship!

Livin' to Die

Why are we here on earth? We may all ask this question, but I know one thing is for sure, we are livin' to die.

Some may serve a true purpose, but for me, I really still don't know. But soon I will find out. To live is to know that we, in our life we have something to accomplish before we leave this earth. Me, I was cursed at birth.

It seems my life was sorted out for me because I been on my own since ten. That was when I became a part of the streets, looked up to my brother and the OG's on the block.

Getting money is what I started. Now I am living to die, because for some odd reason I came to lead the life my brother did and now he's gone. But I'm just out here living to die. But please, before I die I wanna see my son grow up.

-Lil' Jepeabo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are NOT jus living to die. What about your son? You are living to help your son grow. Teach him. Love him. Make him smile. This is why you are on earth. This is what your life is for. We believe that everything happens for a reason, perhaps you've encountered so many struggles in life, to make you strong. Strong enough to support your son, to teach him. His life has so much potential. All he need is your love and support. You can do it! We know you WANT to do it. Be there for him. Don't let him experience what you went through. Don't live to die, LIVE TO LIVE!

**In a way I'm glad
I was caught and
brought here, it
was a wake up call**

Love

Come take me away and wrap me in your arms
Make me feel safe away from harm

Please don't deceive me and drop me in the path
I've been hurt many times
And I plan to make those my last

Love be patient and help me to stay strong
At times I get discouraged don't let go
Just hold on

Trust is an issue that gets harder every time
I just want to feel safe with a love I know is mine

I don't want you to be my lover, but to love me
Love me inside
And with that comes the out
Take me away
Love show what your about

-Imay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Imay, we have faith that you will find someone like this. You deserve a great love. You are a beautiful young woman and an extremely talented writer.

Decisions

I myself make a lot of bad decisions, everyday of my life and I'm trying to work on that.

Sometimes I make the wrong decisions when I know better, and that makes me hella mad with myself.

I always have a feeling or hear a little voice in my head telling me do or don't do something and a lot of times it comes back on me and I remember that thought or that feeling and I say "damn!" to myself. I should have done this, or I should have done that.

I guess to correct making wrong decisions everyday, I need me to go with my "first mind" or think long and hard before I do anything, whatever it may be.

-Unknown, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We all struggle with this. It's good to acknowledge that you have this struggle. Only when we acknowledge our weaknesses, can we overcome them.

That Decision

Unfortunately throughout my life I have some not so good decisions, where some had severe consequences and some miniscule. The last decision I made landed me up in here in juvenile hall.

I decided to make some money the easy way by defrauding people with checks and credit cards. I was coming up left and right making good but illegal money the wrong way. They only way I was caught was by a search at a traffic stop.

In a way I'm glad I was caught and brought here, it was a wake up call and now I'm away from drugs starting to replay my life and making a plan for better decision making.

Do I regret what I did? Yes, but then again it was my decision. If I were to get out tomorrow and I had the opportunity to do it again, I wouldn't! The only reason why I wouldn't is because I think you have a better feeling all over of self-accomplishment and honesty.

I also don't want to be in a federal pen.

-D-Minus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: D-Minus, good for you! We always pay for the consequences of our actions. Just wait! We also enjoy the benefits too!

Me Arrepiento . . .

Yo me arrepiento de lo que he hecho, pero lo que he hecho me ha hecho cambiar y me ha abierto los ojos y me ha enseñado a hacer lo que debo y no debo hacer.

Le agradezco a mis padres por todo lo que han hecho por mí. Lo que han hecho por mí es algo que nunca voy a poder pagarles.

¿Qué es lo que han hecho por mí? Ellos me han dado la vida y es algo maravilloso que Dios me regalo. Son unos padres porque cuando yo estaba con ellos, ellos me aconsejaban mucho pero yo nunca les hice caso a lo que me decían.

Ahora me acuerdo de los consejos que mi madre y mi padre daban, pero yo no les hice caso y por culpa de eso ahora me encuentro en la cárcel.

Espero que me perdonen por todos los errores que he cometido ahora que voy de regreso con ellos. Siento que ahora no soy el mismo de antes. No quiero ser el mismo. Por muy adentro, muy adentro de mi corazón los traigo conmigo y nunca voy a olvidarlos porque es lo más lindo que Dios me ha regalado, por eso desde hoy en adelante voy a tratar de ayudarlos en lo que sea hasta que Dios me lo pida que sera el día que me muera. Ojalá le entiendan a estas letras. Cuiden de sus padres que es lo más lindo que tenemos.

From The Beat: Que espíritu, esperamos que muchos que lean esto aprendan como tú amigo lo haz hecho. No te preocupes por tus padres, nomas hazle saber a ellos que los quieres y que estas arrepentido por todo lo que has hecho, y sera lo único que necesitas. Hazle saber como te sientes y te aseguramos que ellos te perdonaran. Este es un regalo tan grande que Dios te ha dado, porfavor cuida de esto tan lindo que tienes, no te des por vencido y siempre sigue adelante, amigo nuestro.

I Regret . . .

I regret what I have done, but what I have done has made me change and has opened my eyes and has shown me what I should do, and what I shouldn't do.

I appreciate everything that my parents are doing, have done, and are doing for me. There's no way I can pay them back for they have done, and are doing, for me.

What is it that they have done for me? They have given me life and that is something marvelous God has given me. They are good parents because when I was with them, they would give me lots of advice, but I never listened to what they said.

Now I remember the advice that my mother and my father would give me, but I would never listen to them, and because I didn't, I find myself in jail. For this, I can only blame myself.

I hope they can forgive me for all of the mistakes I have made since I am going back home. Now I feel like I am not the same person as before. I don't want to be the same. I carry them deep, deep, deep inside of my heart and I am never going to forget about them because they are the most precious things that God has given me. That's why from now on, I am going to try to help my parents in whatever way I can until God says so, and that will be the day I die. Hopefully y'all understand this. Take care of your parents because they are our most precious possessions.

-José, San Mateo

**That's when
the tears start
Because I know she's
leaving me
Until the next visit**

Delirium

A charismatic drug addict
Full of erratic criminal tactics
Causing havoc
Life very tragic

Experiences so traumatic
But no need to get dramatic
'Cause I've done had it
Tired of being just another statistic
Thoughts become twisted
Voices driving me sadistic
Call me a Latin lunatic
'Cause I stare death in the eyes

To no surprise
See my own demise
Hear terrifying cries
Surrounded by lies
Straight institutionalized
But from ashes I will rise

Evil ways

I try to repent

Try to stop but get hesitant

No use when you're an Arizona resident

Perhaps I was cursed to represent

To be Arizona's most wanted

My dreams are haunted

By this delirium

Shhh . . . Them voices, are you hearing 'em?

-Raymond, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Hey Raymond, incredible flow. You have a very involved and poetic understanding of yourself. You may very well be institutionalized, but with a mind like you have, we believe you can deprogram yourself. Practice by making as many individual decisions as possible, even if you can't make them physically. For instance, decide what you want for breakfast. You'll have to eat what they serve, but decide anyway. Now, about the voices. Is this for real? All of us talk to ourselves, but some people's voices are more convincing and overbearing. How would you describe yours? Ever heard of a guy named John Nash? He heard voices in his head too, but he learned how to deal with them, and ended up winning a Nobel Prize (the dude was obviously pretty smart). They made a movie about him called *A Beautiful Mind*. Check it out some time. Like you said, you can rise from the ashes, too.

My Gramma's Love

I've never felt such
A warmth inside

Or such a peace at heart

Except in the moment

That I hug my gramma

When I feel her soft face against mine

That's when the tears start

Because I know she's leaving me

Until the next visit

Is when I can see

Her accepting eyes

And her sweet smile

Gramma, I love you

You're so special to me

Don't ever leave

Your granddaughter

I forever will be

Sad Eyes

-Sad Eyes, Marin

From The Beat: How do you show your grandma that you love her? Why don't you send her this poem to show her you're thinking of her? How can you make sure that the next time you get released — you won't come back?

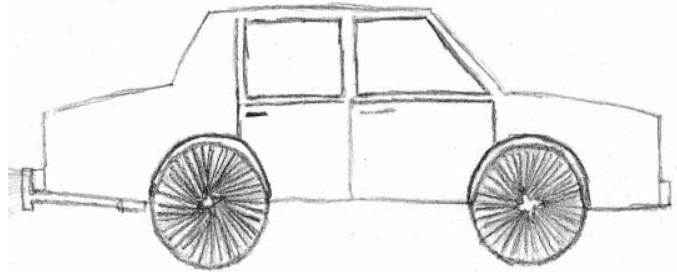
What Could Happen, Captain

It is Friday night,
and there is a party in sight.
You are nervous but what the hell,
and so you walk up and ring the doorbell.
You go in and join the crowd,
and the music is loud.
You meet up with your homies near the beer,
and here is where you should have
listened to your fear.
So you walk over to where your girl is at,
and she said, "Hey grab a beer and let's go
somewhere private and chat."
So you find an empty room,
where some liquor is calling to your doom.
Your girl strips you bare,
but you are so drunk you don't even care.
You make the dumb choice and have unprotected sex
all drunk,
so an hour and a half later you have to drive her
home which stunk.
So you get behind the wheel,
not knowing her life and yours, you are about to
steal.
So you are driving down a 40 mph road at 100 mph,
way too fast,
laughing too hard not knowing it's your last.
Then out of nowhere a cat runs in front of you
missing it not by far,
and you swerve and hit another car.
You are lucky you were stopped by the air bag
but she died at impact going through the windshield.
Two weeks later you are coming out of the hospital
paralyzed from the crash,
with no cash.
The next day you are at her funeral staring at her
casket,
holding a bunch of flowers in a basket.
You can't even look her parents in the eyes,
all you can do is listen to the cries.
You know you have done wrong,
and because of you, yours and many other hearts will
be broken for very long.
Just for having a good time,
instead of waiting until the age of 21, and committed
a regretful crime.

-Logan, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Logan, this is a very sad story that happens way too often. Is this about you or a scenario you imagined? What do you think gets youngsters, and adults for that matter, so caught up in drinking? What makes it seem like you can't have fun sober? We hope this isn't a tale from your life, but if it is, we hope you can find the strength to go on and use your experience to teach others.

**You're stuck with your
consequences for the rest
of your life,
and by the time you realized
you did wrong,
you're facing adult time**



I Now Realize

All through in your life you go through so much,
when you're a baby, you learn to walk and talk.
When you're a toddler, you get potty trained.
When you're five, your mom teaches you respect
some people take it with them, some don't think
they have to.
When you get about eight, you start getting more
responsibility
you have to be in at a certain time, you start
doing dishes.
When people think they don't have
responsibility,
that's when we start getting into trouble.
When we're about the age of twelve, we start
getting in more and more trouble,
we stop being a good citizen, we stop obeying
the laws,
or just your parents or maybe even both.
We break curfew, some try drugs, some break
windows, just little stuff it seems.
When we hit the age of fourteen, we start going a
little higher,
breaking into cars or into houses.
By the age of sixteen we have lost all of our
mom's trust,
she kept giving you chances, and letting you
slide, telling you she loves you,
but she has to give you away, because you have
been in and out of a juvenile facility.
You're stuck on probation or parole in the
system for the rest of life'
or if you're lucky you are allowed off by the age
of twenty-five.
You're stuck with your consequences for the
rest of your life,
and by the time you realized you did wrong,
you're facing adult time,
because you have broke into a house, robbed it
and when the people tried to protect their stuff,
you shot and stabbed a person.
Now you want to change, now you want your
mom.

You realized your mom was the only one there.
Of course that is just some of you,
some change for the better while they're young,
you realize that the life of a criminal is never
good.

-Jessica, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Jessica, is this a word picture of your life or someone else's you know? You point out truths when you write about respect, responsibility, citizenship and the consequences of choices made in life. What do you want in your future? Hanging out with people of positive character will encourage you to do and be the same. Building character is a moment-by-moment process. What choices can you start making today that will impact you and your world in a positive way?

What's Really Going On?

I stop to think! Inside my heart, I'm hiding my depression.

On the outside of my body I'm making a very good impression.

I'm a man writing of my pain with nothing else to gain.

I can't take it anymore, I'm living a life of shame.

I don't seem to make a sound when there are a lot of people around.

Damn, I ask myself, why am I really here?

So many people in fear.

When did it start and when is it going to stop?

Do you think I am living a crazy life?

I told my mom I found my soon-to-be wife!

I'm lost in a sudden daze,

I think Durango is just a stupid maze!

Trying to find my way out

but it looks like I can't 'cause all I see is brick walls

and long halls.

Always up and down these halls I look for you, but you are hard to find.

I bet you when I am out of your sight I am out of your mind.

Damn, I can't even get you out of my mind!

My mom told me I was a drug addict.

My dad keeps telling to stop causing so much havoc,

but I don't 'cause my life is already over.

So tell me what is really going on?

-Kid Dramatic, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Angel, this is an insightful piece. It's confusing when we repeatedly do what we know will result in consequences we do not desire. You try hard to convince yourself that the excitement/high you experience is worth it, but when the high wears off you still have to face "life." We encourage you to stop and take time to listen to those who care about you. Your life is valuable and you may someday look back on this time in your life with a different perspective. Good luck with this relationship, too, but we have to say that it sounds like you need to put a lot of energy into yourself right now. Try not to get too distracted by others.

Should The State Kill?

My momma always told me that two wrongs don't make a right!

So why do we always fight?

Just because someone said something we don't like.

If someone makes a choice to kill someone, why not give them life

Instead of the easy way out to let them die?

I committed a crime now I'm doing the time

Why should they get to die

and not have to look in the mirror,

and think about what they did?

I know it's time to face the facts

that I need to get my life on track

So I don't have to worry about if the state should kill

because I can succeed and I will.

-Titus, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: We agree that the state shouldn't kill, but for different reasons. We don't think that they should suffer for a whole lifetime for a mistake that they made. We think killing someone is wrong regardless if the law says so or not. We feel like the system has faults so it shouldn't make decisions as final as ending someone's life. But hey, what do we know?

Nothing But Time

Sitting in my cell thinking of the things I've done, hurting my loved ones.

Praying to the Lord for you to forgive what I have put you through,

the things I've done to you, never meant to hurt you.

I just had so much hate and anger in me.

I took it out on the one who always tried to help me, who always loved me,

and I should have been loving her and helping her the same way.

I'll never be able to change the past, but I can change the future for you and for mostly me.

I know how I can trust you and no longer go against you with the anger and hatred I have.

I won't be able to do this until you forgive me.

All I can do in the meantime is put faith in God

for you to find the way in your heart to forgive me.

Whatever you decide, to forgive me or not, I'll still love you.

Just remember I'm still your daughter.

We've been through a lot together Mom and just know that I love you a lot.

Dedicated to my hero, my mom

-Kelly, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: The first step towards change is admitting there is a problem. You seem to understand how your actions have impacted your mom and the relationship between the two of you. Thankfully, a mother's love is very strong. It will take time to heal the hurts between you and your mother, but you seem to be motivated to do whatever it takes. We challenge you to go forward building positive memories and not regrets.

He Said He Loved Me . . .

He said he "loved me,"

that I was daddy's little girl

but he was feeling on me

and I was so disturbed that happened for four years

I was sheddin' so many tears

I saw him again and he said he loved me again

that I believed and once again I fell for it.

I started doing drugs I was so ashamed

my body I didn't like, I was so ashamed

guys I used to hate

I started doing drugs

I started skipping school

I went out with guys

and made them look like fools

I was so ashamed I felt stripped, I started

getting counseling

now I'm really cool

I feel good I haven't fallen in love yet

but I hope I will someday soon.

And to my father, only one thing I've got to say:

"Why were you so stupid?"

-Nancy, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: There are no words to describe how tragically you were violated, especially as it was your father, the very person who should have had your best interests at heart. How have you, with the help of others, started the process of healing? What can you share with others who may still be feeling the shame you once felt about what it took for you to start feeling better? What makes the counseling you've received so successful? It took great strength to write this piece.

Stripped

I think any teen can and would say life is difficult and unfair. We start off as a young, innocent human and, bam, you're a teen demanding and pleading with your parents for the freedom to be able to date whoever and at whatever age, to come home at a later curfew and altogether do anything you can't do. But if you have parents like mine, you'd understand that's not possible.

So like most teens, I became rebellious and did sneaky and hurtful things. I started drinking and using drugs heavily, stealing, sneaking out at night, which led to never coming home. Because of this, I have been to two programs, leaving both times with my parents having huge hopes they would have their innocent little angel back. Then each time I came home, things would be fine for a month or so and now here I am in jail.

My mom used to be my number-one hero because, like no one else, she was the only person to have been in my life since day one. I left that behind though, all for friends and what I thought would be a great and fun life. What I am saying is I stripped myself naked of love, care and being what I'm not.

I became a young teen of many masks, lies, and a burden on people lives. Most of all, though, I killed myself emotionally and spiritually. I stripped myself of positive influences, a close friendship with my sisters, staying at one school for all my high school years, which would, of course, concern the prom and trust of confidence within myself. Growing up, I was stripped of my real father because of his poor choices, having my close friend drown, freedom, and truths within my very own past and much more. Compared to all those, I have figured it was the worst feeling to have stripped myself of.

I have learned though, now that I'm almost at the age of eighteen, that the clothes can be put back on one by one, but I have to be willing to change and have the confidence that no one can strip me of my life because I am in control of me. I can only stay strong through the positive.

-Stevie, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: It's quite a trip you've taken, and your awakening to the control you have — and have to exert — over your own life is great to read about. What is it going to require to take the next step — to step up and, in your words, continue putting the articles of clothing back on one by one as you return to the outs? How will you be able to understand your parents' strictness for guidance, and be able to become your own individual at the same time you heed the words of those who are trying to help you? What will it take to begin to repair the relationships that have been damaged over the last few years? How will you stay positive as you fight through the challenges that you face?

Sacrifice

My life began to change right before my eyes
 Out there doing drugs, believing every selfish lie
 I was at the top with everything, that soon began to fall
 Everything was slowly taken away until I had nothing at all
 I no longer noticed that it was my drug and not myself left
 So I resorted to going into stores and making an act of theft
 This whole time I was alone and alone I would stay
 Until the day would come when everything turned gray
 I ended up arrested, in treatment and behind bars
 Now the only thing I see is the sky with all the stars
 I sit in bed and pray to God in the name of Jesus Christ
 That my friend is real such as this sacrifice.

-Drew, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: Now that the time has come when your days have turned gray, how will you bring the clear skies back? When you pray, what is it that you ask for? Are you willing to sacrifice the drugs to find yourself once again?

You Took Everything

You took everything away from me — my family, my friends, my freedom, and my self-respect. You took me far from the people who loved and cared about me. You locked me up in the bedroom when you went out to take care of your "business," and the only time I could show you my affection was when it was on your time.

After so many years of getting called hateful names and numerous beatings, I got up one day and said goodbye.

-Kimberly, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: What was it that finally enabled you to step up and leave? Looking back now, why do you think you felt so deeply for, and stayed so long with, someone who mistreated you so terribly?

If I Only Knew

If I only knew

But now I do

Although I'm young I've been through a lot
 And in some cases I hold regret, but at the same time,
 mostly not

For the simple fact that if a lesson comes my way, it
 will most likely get taught

If I only knew

But now I do

And if I could give the whole wide world the slightest
 bit of advice

I would have to stand proud and say: Before you make
 any decisions

please remember to think twice

Because in my past, the ones I have made almost
 always took me the wrong way.

If I only knew

But now I do

As of now, I'm still sort of lost

Paying my consequences because my choices had
 negative cost

And that is something I'm willing to accept

Because if I don't, I'll never learn
 and remain in negativity while the world continues to
 turn.

If I only knew

But now I do

-Kristen, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Kristen, your piece is very good. The lines you repeat give it a memorable and powerful rhythm, because we often say, "If I only knew." It's good that you have figured out at a young age that you can learn from your mistakes. You don't have to keep being negative, because you know something positive can come from your struggles/difficulties. Kristen, keep on learning from your mistakes and keep on writing great pieces.

**If I only knew
 But now I do**

J-Boogie And Lil' June's Page

Remember

Thoughts of the past grasp my mind
When I think about old times,
Like your face, the first time I saw it,
Or your voice the first time I heard it.
I remember the first time I got close to you,
And the first time I said, "I love you,"
You weren't sure it was true,
Remember that?

Remember when I was at your softball practice trying
to give you tips on how to bat?

Remember yet?
Remember all those times we kissed and to make
each other feel good you'd kiss my ear and I'd kiss
your neck?

No?
How about on the weekdays and even sometimes
when we were grounded and couldn't we'd sneak late
night and talk on the phone?
Do you remember anything?

Like when we made a joke around everyone, but only
we knew what it meant?
I will always

Because we have a connection that's indestructible
in many ways,

And I know you do too,
And I hope you remember we are perfect for each
other,

And there's no me without you.

-J Boogie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Memory is a beautiful thing. All of us who have been in love before can all relate to these memories. Some good, some bad. But they're all beautiful. What do you see in the future for the two of you? Do you think that we all have a soul mate? Is she yours?

So Many Thoughts

So many thoughts of you run through
my head baby,

At least a million daily,

I don't mind showing you my affection,
Especially you a woman with all of my devotion.

When you're not around I feel lonely,
So when I miss you, to ease the pain, I write poetry.
Life is hard without someone for you to love and
someone to love you,

I know, my life was easier until I lost you.
I tried to make it work, tried to make it last,

Tried to do right so you would want
to stay with my ass,

But I failed and slipped up,
And now I'm worried because I miss you so much.
Things are crazy without my one and only,
To talk, hold, and comfort me the way I need.

Hope you feel the same,
Because I'm starting to become insane,
And I can't and won't stop all these thoughts of you
from running through my head baby,
At least a million daily.

-J Boogie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: J Boogie, love hurts! Just like in your piece "Remember", you said, "There is no me without you." Although, it feels that way, you can always define yourself differently, a renewal. True, a lot of who you are lies in whom we love, and who loves us. But, regardless, one of the beautiful things of life is growing. Without change we cannot grow, and without growth, we are dead. So whether or not you get back with your love, there is life after all this. Keep growing!

Court Date

Today I went to court. Going in, I had four options: CYA, Santa Rita, Juvenile Hall, or go back to Camp. The judge and the DA knocked out Santa Rita and Juvenile Hall.

So my last two options were CYA or back to Camp. All of a sudden the whole courtroom got quiet for about five minutes. Then the judge came back and said that she is going to let me return to Camp! But if I leave again, I'm going to CYA.

So I'm going back to Camp, and I will transfer from Camp to Treasure Island Job Corps Center.

-Lil' June, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We couldn't be happier for you! But we're a little scared for you, too — because of last time and what you chose to do. And we believe you really need to prove, especially to you, that you can leave the weed behind — 'cause the same will be true when you're at the Job Corps Center, too! We hope you've learned your lesson — no exceptions! See you at Camp. Coo'.

**I regret even
doing what I did
to have to go
to court**

My Bad Decision

I made a bad decision a few weeks back, and it was not a good one. Faced with an extra thirty days at Camp, I did not return from my home pass.

Now I am happy to be going back to Camp, because I might have gone to CYA, even though I will be there for a few more months. If I had not "run" in the first place, I could have already been out by now! So that was the bad decision I made.

-Lil' June, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Don't trip on the past, but make sure it goes down differently this time. And that begins with no dirty pee tests, right? Get on top of it before you move on to Job Corps! And if your homies are your friends, they'll support you. Yanawmean? Stay clean!

I Regret Missing Court

I regret not going to court! Because of that, I've been in Juvie for forty days!

It really doesn't matter though, 'cause I'm supposed to get out on the ninth of August. But all the time I've been in here — is lost to the County. That's what I really regret. It seems like I've been locked up for a year.

I regret even doing what I did to have to go to court. It makes me mad, because they let me go from here to start my adult life, and I messed up forty-five days of my life 'cause I missed my court date.

I hope when I get out of Juvie, I can do the right thing. 'Cause if I don't, I'll be right back in the same predicament, saying, "I regret! I regret! I regret!"

-Lil' June, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Two Lil' June's in the same room! Different races, different places, both singing the same tune. Why did you miss the court date? Did you forget? Were you too high to deal with it? Why do you keep slipping back into the system? Where does it start? Cutting school? Staying out nights? Getting high?

Black Magik and Lil' Bott's Page

What Do They Say?

As I reminisce or better yet contemplate the way I noticed how my family treated me. I saw less respect, more shame and less trust. My uncles, aunties, and other family members talk me down too. I've realized the friends that look at me as foolish but help me through my demise, treat me with respect but don't look down at me for it.

I don't see my self as the same person. I doubt my friends or family do.

My closest friend talks deep conversations with me about getting out the 'hood but at this point I'm afraid that's not an option.

My friends and family fear me; at least the ones that are superficial just there for my rep. Because of that the only friends or fake acquaintances don't back talk or play as much. They are intimidated by my jail characteristics and mind.

My temper, which is bad, has made out to be the diablo. Many things have changed less or stayed the same each time I am incarcerated. All I know — no man can take my legacy — they can disrespect and talk but at heart I have become more mature — but don't mistake maturity for greatness. Learn and live quick — die quick!!!!

-Black Magik, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you always want to have the rep of a diablo? Do you feel that you'll always live in the ghetto? Do you feel helpless against your environment? Do you want to be known for the good things you do? What is your legacy? And, are you sure you want to die quick?



Movin' Under Pressure

Making right choices can keep out of here.

Listening to you boys,

doing crimes only brings you tears.

Fear and bad peers, young men of America open your mind, eyes, and ears to hear

Moving under pressure is like scared straight programs but no one to save you — not even a guard.

Pushing too much weight can lead you to the cemetery yard not too far from ya buddy that got killed in his front yard over a stolen car.

See moving under pressure don't get you to far, only six feet deep in the dirt.

-Lil' Bott, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How can you make it so that you don't feel too pressured? How can you make your life more stable? How can you make sure that your future isn't shorted?

Decision

A lot of people say environment, image and what you've been through is what your decision is. That's true but it's not because most of the reason we all end up here is impulse. This day and age if you don't get it quick enough or go through enough shhh — you learn even harder.

So everyday I am or we are faced with those types of plight or we end up worse... dead. It's no excuse — you can't make a cowboy by giving him a rope. You got to teach him how to use it. If you don't — what do the DAs and judges expect?

-Black Magik, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you think that a change of environment would help you? If you change your image do you think people would look at you differently? Have you learned anything from your time in the Hall? What was it?

Regrets I Have

I regret the first bad decision I made — not to tell the truth.

When my mom found out I lied — she beat me with the hard end of the broom.

I regret ever hanging with them fools.

All I wanted to do is get high 'cause it was the thang to do.

Boys in blue came and everybody and me flew.

My most of all regret is when I let my girl fool around and I had no clue.

-Lil' Bott, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you think that there will always be some element of regret in your life? Can you ever forgive yourself for these things? If you regret it — does it mean that you will stop doing it? If your answer is no — then you don't really regret it.

It Is All Bad

It's all bad when you don't obey your mother.

It's all bad when you can't think and everything clutters.

It's all bad when you can't leave in and out of your own home anymore.

It's all bad when you lose score.

It's all bad when you are forced to turn around and be cuffed once more.

It's all bad when you don't know what you die or live for.

It's all bad when your brain gets to sore to control your body movements because you contaminated it.

It's all bad when you can't stop popping at the lip.

Then it's really all bad when your enemy got a full clip and you ain't got shhh.

-Lil' Bott, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What can you do to change the all-bad? When it's all bad — does it make you all sad? How can you make things better? How can you make it all good? If you start listening to your mother, will that help? What do you live for? Would you die for the same things you live for?

**It's all bad when you
don't know what you
die or live for.**

Eric's Page

Rappin'

When I feel like rappin'
I feel like clappin'
When I feel like smokin'
I feel like choking
Covered with big fogs of cloud
Trying to see my way out
It's a struggle,
like I'm playin' tug of war
But my arms is sore
Ready to give up and let them take the
best of me
Couldn't picture that taken
From a youngsta like "E"
Where would I go?
Who will I know?
Who will I show, that I'm living heat?
Trying to stand up defenseless
On my own two feet
Couldn't tell 'cause I carry this heat
I might as well carry a vest
Just to protect my chest
'Cause I'm thin and cold
But I really don't think
I'm ready for rest
Got females too deep and no sleep
Trying to get my chips
When I pull out the Caddy, that's
when I got to dip
But bounce back
to the same old shift.

-Eric, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Interesting flow. In life we've all got struggles. You're not ready to give up. You told us what you feel like doing, when you're doing what you're doing. Tell us what you feel like when you're writing. Share more with us, like how you see your way out of this mess? Who are you having a tug of war with?

Controlling My Life

Controlling my life I really think is valuable. Just as my life it's a reason why things happen. I'm a leader not a follower.

It's like the leaders is the chess players and the followers are on the front line trying to get a stripe for themselves. I don't need a stripe because my lifeline runs longer then just a stripe. Like being locked up over a stripe, being killed over a stripe it's nonsense. You got to know who you are, first of all things, then know your history.

I'm only one man and now I feel stuck in the hood of society. I have an option to do what's right or wrong, most people make lots of mistakes but everyone isn't perfect. But if you accept the struggle as it is then you will find out that it's not all about being stuck to the hood of society.

It's because once you find out that Eve was the one who put the fruit to Adam's mouth, after being told if she did man will not live eternal, it was going to be a struggle from the start.

I'm a person that want to be something in life and it's time. I'll do whatever it takes. It's by being productive, people are being sent to war just because of nonproductive people who can't vote against the top man reading the books of fiction and understanding life itself. If I can change my old ways, anyone can, like the blink of an eye. It's never too late.

It all comes to a conclusion where it's you and only you who can run your life. Me being in jail wasn't a mystery of me not controlling my life. It was just a mistake of life some people like me had made. But to make the mistake over and over again is just out of controversy. It's me and only me who can control my life. I refuse to let anyone else control my life, it's too valuable.

Just like they say you can never kill an enemy, because you wouldn't be in that situation if you were a man who stands alone. It's only the healthy one who stands alone.

Most people that want to be hard but when things start to happen like getting to that age of being sent to war to die or knowing you could die in the war, the mighty old heart you had before isn't there anymore. And I'm a person who could confess to if I'm anxious, kind of worried of what might happen. It's time people start picking up their bibles cause if you believe in heaven and hell like I do, you would be the smart one to know you don't live forever. And it's like sticking an animal size, through a sewing needle to get to heaven. And you never know when he's going to come 'cause he's coming like a thief in the night. And that's one man who I fear of all man.

So it's may the Lord be with me 'cause I'm not so sure if I'm ready for the Armageddon right now.

-Eric, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Eric, you are a smart guy, you are always thinking. It sounds like you have a lot on your mind here. What was it that turned you onto the Bible? Who controls your life? Do you stand-alone? Or does a man who believes in God never stand alone? If you believe in Heaven and Hell, what do you believe determines which way a soul will go? What is the purpose of life? You mention struggles in life, if it has been a struggle from the start, do you think that this is all part of God's plan? Do these struggles serve a purpose? Teach us what you're learning, what you believe. How 'bout in your next piece you tell us what you want out of your life and how you hope to get what it is you are after?

Flow Like The Ocean

I flow like the ocean
See me in motion
After one sip of potion
I tell yaw' life is a trip
When you fooling' with them tricks
I'm a tripping' magician
Tricks up my sleeve
I'm a leave, not to be deceased
But to get some of that fine green leaf
It isn't good, when I hit the wrong spot
There I go fooling' with them knocks
You tell me you better
But I spell them letters
What's in it far, "E" got meals to eat
Got people to teach
Quit playing' with my speech
I'm never gone stop
Listen and learn
Never had nothing' in life
What's the price by earning' my life
Doing what's right at the spotlight
Stashing the weed it's too hot
So I get rid of the heat
Sweating' from the Christian Brothers
'Cause it's kicking' my ass I'm sinning'
Trying' to win but my head keep spinning'
Meditation, calming' it down
Turn down the beat it's too loud
Task is behind all up in mine
I never been committed for a crime

Just to make a dime
Ask me some questions
I tell you no lie

All in my face while I'm rubbing' my eyes
He asks me "am I that type of guy?"
To ask myself why I'm driving while high
Doing over a hundred and five
Contemplation no license all in my head
Had a few tickets that never been read
That's how I feel when I'm spitting' my lead
It's never been spoken
Like hake's poke's
Give me an ear so you know that I wrote this
Sour like Lucas, spicy like pepper
But I'm icy cold so stay away from the
weather
A big booty chick don't make my day
But if she got money, I will get my way
It's hard to say, my players don't make
The money it takes
To bake the biggest cake
People ask me what do it take
For a little bit of this and a little bit of that
You got to have talent
Write what you know or you' bullish is
whack!
Flush it down the toilet like it's some crack
Out with the old in with the new
It's nothing' to you
So it's nothing to me
Bringing my peoples
While you bringing yo' pistols

A busta, a mark, a sucka, a square
Can't you see a brother like me?
I really don't care

Doing what I do, making me steady
While a chick washing my head
It's not that I'm ready
It's just 'cause I said
I'm ready
I know the conclusion
A little wisdom can't hurt
To be alert
And aware, a little money could get you hurt
The lifestyle I live, encounter with power
Drizzling with rain
Is like taken showers of pain
Never know who you gonna meet
But a struggle is who you gone defeat
Run to it instead of running away from it
'Cause in the long run
It's gon' come to a conclusion
Where it's you and only you who can run
your life.

-Eric, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, Eric you really take us on a wild ride, with this piece. We agree with your point; only YOU can run your life. You make decisions about your life, right? Well, what are your life decisions? It sounds like you are trapped between the decision of paper chasing and all the things that come along with that lifestyle, and living right. Is this that struggle you're talking about? Where do you see your life going?

Pierre's Page

Back In the Mix

when you look at me you get twisted
 i can tell by how yo' eye fidget
 don't look away now that i'm on the prowl
 i learned i ain't got no potnas and dispose of their fake smiles
 see these ninjas is fake just like these females
 see it ain't no different like some may think
 they say they ain't scared but when i jump they blink
 i thought you was my potna held my back up for a while
 now i see the truth and it ain't funny so don't smile
 see y'all hate 'cause i'm a youngsta gettin' his dough
 every other month i'm in a car and y'all wanna know
 where i get it and how i get it is a mystery
 y'all keep hatin' 'cause y'all can't get to me
 i only write this to acknowledge the haters
 consider this flow like the superbowl
 you fakers gettin' blew out like the raiders
 so hold yo' breath
 'cause these words aiming straight at your chest

-Pierre, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've had a revelation: you found out your partners were faking! And the girls that loved your cabbage, left you for the next savage living lavish. And you're blaming everyone but yourself, when it's a scandalous game — the life you were living and it's short-lived wealth. The game will have you twisted until you realize you need to quit the business of slanging dope, hitting licks, robbing folks. No joke!



LOCK UP

Fallen Loved Ones

this goes out to
 my fallen loved ones
 the ones that have fell short
 under the guns
 the ones that didn't get
 to see eternal life
 the ones i miss and wish
 they were on my right
 my fallen loved ones that got
 took out in the middle of the night
 but the time doesn't matter
 just whoever took y'all out was cowards
 i pray for y'all every night
 now y'all gone it just ain't right
 to hear y'all was gone
 rocked my world
 but don't trip
 i'm holding it down
 next time i see y'all
 we all gone smile
 rip jerm
 rip mella
 rip jose

-Pierre, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How do you know they didn't get to see eternal life? Maybe they were forgiven and now they're looking down from heaven trying to tell you and the rest on earth still living — that you need to quit all of that bullshit that buried them too young. Listen in the night when it's so quiet you hear your own blood hum; listen for their voices to come: "Don't die in the street. Change your life, young G!" (RIP Jerm, Mella, Jose)

Regret

i regret the day i met you
 i wish i would have not been so quick
 to sweat you
 you and your girl looking
 right now i regret
 and it haunts me at night
 you think you stuntin' with your other dude
 after he get to the chocolate factory
 he gon' regret it too
 see my regrets come from the thought
 and are worth more than your love
 which was bought
 your life would be lavish
 if you were to stay with me
 now you' sleeping around
 waiting to catch a s t d
 i thought i would never regret
 now when i see you
 it almost make me sick
 see you gotta recognize who i am
 and not be so quick
 to think like you got the master plan
 so rip and run
 i'm tired of weepin'
 you regret
 while i have fun
 i'm out
 on-one don

-Pierre, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Don't let bitterness get you too twisted to see that there's a lesson to be learned here about relationships and realities. Don't court a girl with promises of living lavish, unless you want a girl to love your cabbage more than she loves you. You can't romance like a player and expect to get love that's true. So take the spotlight off of her and shine it back on you.

i learned i ain't
 got no potnas
 and dispose of
 their fake smiles

Evan and Young Smokey's Page

Decisions, Bad and Good

Obviously I made a bad decision. That's why I'm in here. Once I get out, I'll try to make better decisions. My decision to stay in a Hayward school when I'll be living in Livermore, is a big decision that, I think, won't even happen.

I read in a book that God controls the good and bad things that happen in someone's life. The bad times are just some times that are meant to affect your way of thinking so you don't mess up later in life. I think for every one bad thing — there's two good ones!

-Evan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you make a bad decision, it's hard to say what would be a good or bad consequence. Everyone hopes not to get caught, but is that good? Not if it has you making more bad (or even worse) decisions. In the end, most "good" and "bad" things happening to you, are revealed to be good or bad for you depending on how they affect your thought and actions.

Song of The Ghetto News

so many battlefield scars
from dealin' wit' these brats
the funk so drastic
can't leave my house wit' out my strap
what type of life is this to lead
to take away stress i have sex or smoke weed
guess the homies didn't like my name
so they renamed me young smokey
on the block from dusk till dawn
then gettin' high from dawn till dusk
rollin' around in a bucket riddled wit' old bullet holes
look like a movin' can of rust
in god we trust
hopin' not to attend another ghetto family reunion
hearin' from ashes to ashes from dust to dust
that's why we packin' the cuete 'cause we must
ain't tryin' to have moms wear that black dress
but when it comes to my 'hood and family
i'll do whatever to protect
even if it mean my own death
which i really don't like as much of a' option
but rather have me then mom's body floppin'
as it hits the pavement
the streets got such a hook on me and my homies
like a new form of enslavement
this is the way i choose to play it
ain't nothing you or i can do to save it
this is in regards to my life
a lost cause
like tryin' to stop day from turnin' to night
it's a constant fight that y'all always lose
tryin' to change a ninja livin' out the song of the
ghetto news

-Young Smokey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're 100% right: we can't save your life. Is that what you think we do? We know that can only be done by you. But this talk about protecting your mom, while the life you choose is like planting a bomb in her living room! And that image of your mom's body flopping? You need to put a check on your talking! 'Cause the biggest danger to her is when you walk in! And it doesn't have to be that way. But you don't want to change, okay? You'd rather play it like a new form of enslavement. If so, The Beat must be the new underground railway. You say your life is already gone? Well, then, which side do you want to be on? We could use your talent, if you could just take on the challenge.

Childhood Memories

in a big ol' world
standing five foot four
seeing so many things at a young age
like police kicking in my front door
yelling and screaming everyone on the floor
y'all move you ain't fi' to breathe no more
this is just some of shhh i witnessed
in the early nineties i grew up on shhh like this
if the homies seen you with some jordans on
if you' a square you' gettin' tossed like a gymnast
back in them days them shoes was the hippest
if you wasn't strapped you bound to get hit for them
shhhs
always hearing gunfire an' tires screeching
knowing someone getting killed
never know who was doing the murdering
for all you know it could've been your next-door
neighbors
every nine months seeing an ambulance
'cause next door the dope fien' going into labor
but could never take care of them dirty-butt babies
an' those mean-teethed pit bulls
find out later that they have rabies
kept asking mom to take me to disneyland
in response all i heard was maybes
an' end up never even leaving my 'hood
guess you can call my childhood shady
but to tell you the truth as a person it made me
mentally and emotionally stronger
an' though my life's obstacles ain't the usual
through my experience in the game i will last longer

-Young Smokey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Take that experience outside your game plan, and you'll last longer than even you think you can. So you never made it to Disneyland, but we read your writing and understand that we're encountering the mind of a most imaginative young man. Yet all your intelligence is irrelevant to survival in the game, 'cause the smarter you are, the sooner you go insane. Or you could turn your life around, transform your written words into a weapon and throw it down. Take this intellectual heat with which your mental faculties are replete and burn your past away in a pyrotechnical display of savage proof that there is life after childhood pain, misguided youth and this incarceration. Show the world what only you can do with a pencil and a single sheet of paper — give the world another flavor, some real ghetto news to savor beyond the gangster raps that corporate slavers favor.

I Don't Think I'll Ever Feel the Same

My family thinks I'm crazy. I didn't even want my whole family to know I went to jail.

I thought the only people who knew were my mom, dad and older brother — but now that I know that my uncles, aunts and grandma know, I don't think I'll ever feel the same way around them.

My friends, I hope, don't even know. Hopefully, my family won't change their actions or feelings toward me. I don't know what kind of reaction my friends would have if I told them. I hope I don't lose any friends over this.

-Evan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Initially, you may feel some embarrassment with your family and you may sense their disapproval, real or imagined. However, as day after day you prove yourself responsible and trustworthy; as you demonstrate you've learned your lesson and won't make the same mistake again — things will return to normal; maybe even better than before!

Shady Boy's Page

RIP Key, EJ and Chris

i lost y'all to the streets i know
and i wish y'all were here
because i miss y'all so
y'all always told me
don't let anyone bring you down
and y'all helped me
keep a smile instead of a frown
i thought of y'all as the best
and then one day y'all made a trek
and y'all died
my mom came to get me
and told me y'all died
and i went home and cried
i know y'all have kids to teach
and i will visit them every day
so many tears i have shed
knowing y'all were dead
i know y'all not here anymore
and i am proud to know that god
is waiting for y'all at heaven's front door
i have loved y'all from the start
and y'all will always be here in my heart
i will declare defeat
because we lost y'all to the streets
i will see y'all again someday
but until then in my heart y'all will stay
i will visit y'all at y'all grave
and i will always remember
that y'all were brave
i thought our ninja were true
and now look he have done to you
may y'all rest in peace forever
and y'all have fun running
up and down god's hallways
we are always together
no matter what always together
r i p kev ej chris

-Shady Boy's, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a brilliant, beautiful and moving poem. And we're glad you plan to show up for the children after your friends have gone. But we need to change the definition of strong, from outlaws doing wrong and dying young, to proud gees who know how to be free and live responsibly so they can be there for their families. You feel? No more needless losses to the street when there are so many little ones in need. In your poem you took a vow — show up for the living, now.



Wasn't Right

I regret a lot of things I did, because I know what I did to people and things I said to people — wasn't right!

I regret shooting at people. I could have hurt people. And I could've got a lot of time for them things I did to people. I regret sellin' people drugs, because I wouldn't want nobody sellin' my momma or my sister and brother that stuff! So I regret it.

And I regret not listening to my family, because if I had listened — I wouldn't be here today!

-Shady Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You didn't listen to the Golden Rule: Do not do to anyone else what you would not want done to you. But now you know, it doesn't only protect others, it protects you. And now you know, if you'd listened, you wouldn't be locked up in the system. We admire the strength of character it takes, to see it and say it.

may y'all rest in
peace forever
and y'all have fun
running
up and down
god's hallways

RIP Grandmother

november twenty-seventh nineteen fifty-seven
to june twenty-fifth two thousand and three
they say the good die but why you
when i heard what happened
wasn't nothing i could do
the first that told me was my mother
i thought hell naw not my grandmother
it was a month before my birthday
from then to now my heart has been sore
first kev and ej then chris and now you too
three partnas and you
in a year and a month
this can't be true
but now i'm here at the hall
staying tall through it all
just for you i'm turn my life right
i love you grandmother
see you next life
r i p grandmother
i love you forever

-Shady Boy's, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you swear on your grandmother's grave to turn your life right, then why do you still sign "shady boy" on the bottom line? To keep your promise, so your grandmother can rest in peace, you'll need a new identity that rises above those shady streets. Can you change with a shady name? Please explain.

Abbas and D-Frank's Page

Other People's Opinions

My family's view of me, will still be the same. They won't judge me for a mistake I've made in the past. However, society will always see me as a criminal, even though I've changed my life totally!

My friends' views toward me, will hopefully remain the same — except I won't do any of the drugs they do or participate in their petty crimes. I will be the same person, but with a whole different mentality.

My family's love will always be there, but hopefully my friends don't scatter when they see the change in me. I don't think they will lose respect for me. I've changed. Hopefully I can convince my friends to change, too.

But my goal is not to let other people's opinions affect me — because that's what got me into this mess!

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: For a long time it will seem as if society's view of you remains unchanged, but if you maintain a responsible life, in the eyes of all those who know you and get to know you — that real society around you, will recognize and accept the new you. As for old friends, even if they respect and support you, if they don't change — over time it will feel as if they avoid you, because they'll know you don't want to go where they go or do what they do. That might be the hardest part about your changing, too.

**he best decision
I've made — is to
change my life!**

Decisions That Changed My Life

I've made a few horrible decisions in my life. The first would have to be when I started not listening to my family and just doing whatever I wanted.

Then I made the stupid decision to start smoking weed and letting it distract me from my schoolwork and my priorities.

Then I made the decision that changed my life totally, in a very positive way! It was a very bad decision at first, but then I learned so much throughout my incarceration that I thank Allah for giving me the chance to change!

I've become a man with goals and become much closer to my religion. But so far, the best decision I've made — is to change my life!

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: They say every crisis is also an opportunity to change, for those who can see through the stress and maintain. Thank Allah, that you've turned your punishment into a blessing by learning your lesson. Props! The original meaning of a "penitentiary" was not a place to punish but to give you "time" to realize your misdeeds, experience regret, and repent (change).

Who Cares What They See!

i'm still me
i haven't lost sight
yeah i was locked up
yeah i did fight
but what would you do
when you wake up in jail
some say you lost
some say you fail
if you were here now
what would you do
don't look for me
'cause i won't help you
so say what you want
and see what you see
no matter what happens
i'm still gonna be me

-D-Frank, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel you on this, but everyone says, "I'm gonna be me!" — and leaves us wondering who that might be.

I Still Love You

it's the way that you smile
and the way that we kiss
the way that you held me
these things will be missed
but all is not lost
hard times make you stronger
'cause if we hold on tight
we'll last ten times longer
you mean the world to me
the stars and moon too
i got lost for a second
but i still love you

-D-Frank, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometime when your world crashes, even the things you still love seem to feel like they turn to ashes. With time such love grows colder, or burns again — brighter, bolder.

Messed Up

i regret the day
i was introduced to weed
i regret not listening
to my family
i regret not changing sooner
i regret meeting
some of my friends
i regret when
i chose to do
whatever i wanted
because that really
messed up my life

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: However, now that your heart has learned its lesson, you know more clearly what you really want. And with an educated heart, you can do what you want — because now you know you want what's good for you and for those you love, too!

**without you
i'm empty
i'm blind
and
can't see**

One Love

why do we try
to find one true love
that one special person
who fits like a glove
and what do we do
when tough times get tougher
should we run and hide
or remain just to suffer
but then there's those days
when you can't leave their side
just being with them
makes you feel alive
just holding them close
and laying together
everything goes right
no matter the weather
so why should i quit
when you complete me
without you i'm empty
i'm blind and can't see

-D-Frank, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Love is a must, but that's a real question about when times get tough. When it's outside circumstances, you just need to suck it up. When tough times erupt from all the stuff that never got worked out, you need to get about working it out — or check the balance and ask: does the love outweigh the inner violence? Yours sounds like a love that's true, so give it everything you've got — and that's all you can do.

"I Regret . . ."**Caught**

I regret getting caught 'cause if I didn't get caught — I wouldn't be in here. I needed the money so I burglarized the school. I was going to buy clothes, food, and things I needed.

See the first time I ran from the Ranch — I started noticing I needed these things. When I was on the run my mom wouldn't provide me with these things. Next time, the thing I would do differently is not get caught — but I can't be sure. When I am in here, I think about my sister; she's four right now and the past two years I wasn't there.

-Lalo

From The Beat: You have no control whether you get caught or not but you do have control over your actions. If your actions and choices are smart then you don't even have to worry about getting caught! How can you be a good role model for your sister?

Gettin' Caught

I regret getting caught. I don't regret doin' the crime, but just gettin' caught.

Because if I didn't get caught up, I'd be kickin' it wit' my patna, Lil' Vell. And we would be gettin' it right now! But we got caught up, and now we' in this mess.

So, like I said, the only thing I regret is gettin' caught up. Everything else was done purposely, for money!

-Howard

From The Beat: You need to rise above the level — if you do it for money, it's the right thing to do. You need to get to — do the right thing for your money, and be cool! You might have gotten into a deeper mess, if you hadn't gotten caught up like this. What it is.

The Day I Cut School

I regret the day I cut school with my friends just to look for cars to jack. We was looking for car radios so we can take them and go sell it.

After we got one we thought it was too easy so we look for more since school wasn't over yet. We ended up with like six or seven (CD) decks and we was ready to leave the area, then the cops pulled up.

We threw all the stuff in the bushes and ran, we got away but our dumb selves went back like a hour later for the stuff. We didn't know it but the cops were all over the place. And when we picked up the shhh one of the cops saw us and called back up.

That was nothing because we didn't even do time for it, but I regret it 'cause I got put on probation for it.

I been doing good ever since and I got off. But now I'm in here for some shhh I didn't do. Someone pointed out the wrong person, but the cops don't believe me.

Ain't shhh I can do 'bout it.

-Saephanh

From The Beat: As frustrating as it may be, this time out from freedom could probably be the best thing that happens to you, that is if you use your head and don't be the fool. We're not sure how many times you've violated others, by jacking their cars, but that's far from cool. Think of how many people's lives you have disrupted, and pain you have caused? Can't you find something productive to do with yourself? Take a look at yourself, the people you hang with, the things you do and don't do, can you see a way to improve your life? First suggestion, stay in school.

Regret Coming To The Hall

I regret coming to the Hall. Well my name is Chato and I was raised in Hayward.

Well, this is my second time in the Hall but this time I ain't in here for a big problem; I am just in here for violating my program. Either way if it's not a big deal I still look at it like I violated certain rules and that's why I am here and not just me but all of us in the Hall are here.

Well I just want to let you know stay out of trouble and get your life straight. Pick a good way to live your life.

-Chato

From The Beat: We can see that you have a good head on your shoulders but you also have to get out of the system. That place will hold you down. What can you do to complete a program and make it out the system?

I Regret That Stupid Decision

i regret hanging around the wrong people and getting drunk because now i'm in the probation system for five years that was a stupid decision

i want to get out of juvenile hall because i can't stand being in here locked up and i can't stand the little annoying kids in my unit

-Lil' Hot Sauce

From The Beat: You stop drinking and you start thinking. You feel regret and irritation, because of the time you're facing. You need to let it go, take it slow, and start to change. Meanwhile, maintain.

I Regret That Day

I regret the day that I was drinkin' a forty ounce of that good ol' Budweiser and smokin' a fat blunt at the park in Newark.

The reason I regret that day, is because while I was drinkin' that good ol' forty ounce and smokin' that fat blunt — a fat policeman named Officer Leer, ran up on me and one of my square patnas. He was undercover in some denim jeans and a denim jean jacket, but when I saw his face, I knew it was him from past experiences with him, me and the homeboys from Newark.

I was about to shake the spot, but he told me, "Go ahead and run, but I got my back-up unit waiting around the corner!" So I stayed, and he searched me and my patna. He had a warrant on me, and I was holding a sixteenth of that "ice water" — but he didn't find it!

He had caught me hittin' up "the bench" and caught me soakin' on my forty ounce. And the next thing I knew, he took me to the Newark police station and booked me. Then he called my mom and told her to come pick me up.

He cited me, and when I went to court, the judge put me on probation. And that's why I regret that day!

-Young Scooby

From The Beat: The only way to turn that regret into something positive, is to take responsibility for your part in what happened. But we hear no regret in your drinking or smoking at the park, just at your getting caught. Nor any regret that you were holding, just relief that it didn't get found. Keep playing it that same way, and you'll have more experiences when you "regret that day"!

I Hall Regret

I regret all the times being in the Hall and, I wish everybody gets out and won't ever come back here.

My regret is coming to the Hall so next time I will listen to what my head tell me to do. And I'll be on time at my home, when my mom tells me to go home — I will go home.

I will never listen to my friends and now I will respect my mom.

-Luis

From The Beat: We hope that you will be able to find a way out of the system and make your mother proud. How can you make sure that you don't let your friends influence you? Can you choose a different crowd?

going to my OG patnas.

I should've had him take me to get something to eat instead of just sit there talking, we never would have got bluter. How I had a warrant, then I found out he had one too. So that day we both went down.

Before that I would see the police and keep lit every time but not this time. So now at eighteen I am set in here with these youngsters.

I should've just finished camp last year and I would be free right now, but I want to be cool and run with the next fool, but he mess up his program. I was mad that I didn't care about nothing, right then.

So the results, Alameda County Jail.

I regret my topic.

-George

From The Beat: What exactly is it that you regret about that day? You said that you didn't care about nothing, well, what's your attitude now? Are you going to make a change when you get out of the Hall? What did you learn from this regret?

Running

i regret the day i went back home because that's the day i got caught up i regret not running from my home supe' because i had nothing to lose i regret arguing with my girl 'cause i never would've left her house i regret having a dirty pee test 'cause i never would have ran i regret running 'cause i made everyone mad i regret not pimping it 'cause a week was all i had i regret the bad stuff i do and everybody understand i regret actin' dumb 'cause now i got to listen to demands

-Lil' Mono

From The Beat: Pimping it is what all the homies recommend, but you've got to do more — you've got to make amends. You regret running, you regret not running, you regret getting caught. Nothing will change until you allow yourself to be taught — not about rules and how to pimp 'em, but right from wrong and how to live.

Decisions and Dirt

What I've been regretting since the day I was put on probation, and every time I get locked up, are the decisions I've made and the dirt I've done.

I regret all the decisions I've made that have gotten me into trouble. Well, I'm out. Stay up.

-Crazy

From The Beat: Everyone regrets, but few repent (change). We believe you're one of the few — those that see and can do!

I Regret Coming Here

I regret ever coming to juvenile hall. Now I'm in this stupid system. I can't smoke weed, drink, or even be off stunnas.

I also gots' to go to a group home and be with females I don't even know. And probably got hella problems. They probably gonna get on my nerves. I can't be around too many females. I gots' to stay away from my mommy. I never been away for too long. Probably like just two months, the longest. Now I have to go to a group home for a year. I'm mommy's little girl. She spoils me a lot.

I hate being in jail. I gots' to wear nasty panties and bras, everyone who's been here wears the same shhh.

All I know is I'm gonna do my little program and get it over with, and get out this damn system. It's all messed up. I'm out!

-Tinkerbell

From The Beat: Tinkerbell, juvenile hall sucks! You're right. It's good to hear that you hate it so much, but also take a good look at yourself. You are the one hurting your freedom, by the weed, the drink and the stunnas. You also need to check that attitude of yours and get yourself to look at life a bit differently. We know that you are capable of doing your time wisely. You are a smart young lady. We all have regrets, but it really takes someone wise to learn from them. Do your program and get out of this damn system, and stay out. And in order to stay out you better have a plan, a damn good game plan too!

I Regret My Topic

Man, only if you guys know how much I regret going to the spot that early in the morning just to get some money. Because if I would had waited and went back to sleep, then called my girl instead of go straight to the block and not

"I Regret . . ."

I Won't Come Back To Jail

I regret making the mistake I made for me to be in juvenile. But, now, everybody makes mistakes, and right now I can't really do anything but sit here and learn from my mistakes. I mean, the judge's decision was better than my PO's recommendation. I'm mad, but I'll be out soon, and I know what to do and who to stay away from so that I won't come back to jail.

-Mac B4

From The Beat: Mac, just from the short time we've known you, we already know that you are a smart, determined young man who will make it out and succeed in society. We just want to wish you the best of luck.

Comin' Back

I regret comin' back to this four-cornered box, gray sweaters, khakis, and sandals. I'm tired of this mess, but I keep comin' back. I don't know why.

-Forgot To Sign B1

From The Beat: What happens to you when you're confronted with temptation? Do you think you'll get away with whatever just that one time, but you get busted? What is it that appeals to you about whatever gets you busted? The thrill? Cash? Your reputation? What would it take for you to say no next time? Would you have to be facing a long incarceration first? How "tired of this" will you have to get in order to change it?

I Regret, But Then Again...

I regret just living life and doing all the shhhh I did, but it's too late to regret that because I did what did. So I can't really regret this life. I just need to keep my head and keep it moving so I won't have to regret nothing.

-Lil' Dakota B4

From The Beat: It's never too late to regret anything. It is never too late to change, especially when one wants to change.

Regret

I regret making a lot of decisions in my life because I haven't accomplished a lot that I could've in my life. I wished I could've made a lot better decisions.

-Diamond Pg B4

From The Beat: What is it that you wish you had accomplished by now that you haven't? How are you going to remedy the situation?

Mad At Myself

I regret the day I got arrested. I should've not jacked that person for his whip. Now I feel the heat coming down on me. DA mad at me tryna send me to YA.

Now, I know how serious of what I did. I can't change the past but I can change the future. All I can really do right now is be mad at myself for putting myself in the situation.

This all I got for y'all. A'ight, a'ight then be coo'.

-D-Baby B5

From The Beat: We truly appreciate the fact that you regret what you did, but we wonder what you didn't know then that you know now? You knew it was against the law, and that you could go to jail (the Hall) for jacking someone's car, didn't you? So what will be different when you get out? What will keep you from doing the same thing next time? You are, of course, 100% right that you can only change the future, and we hope what you've gone through will lead you to do exactly that!

I Regret

I was at the Walden House for only five days before I got locked up. I slapped someone's milk carton off his hand, and they said that was an assault. That dude's a punk anyways. I don't know why I even wasted my time.

When I come out and go back to the Walden House, I'm gonna start off clean and do the program. 90 days. Like my YTEC scholar said, "Knock that shhhh out. It ain't 'nuttin'."

Well today is 7/24/04. I'll be out of Walden on 10/21/04. Now I'm gone.

-Phu Quy B4

From The Beat: Phu, when you really look back and think about the incident, who really was the punk? We are not saying that you are a punk, but in a way you are because you are getting punked by the system. You did something to someone that you said was a punk, but in return, dude's out there doing his program and you are sitting in the halls doing dead time. So next time, think before you react.

I Should Not Have Messed With Her

I regret messin' with that girl who brought me in here. The reason why I am in here is because she said I forced myself on her, which I did not. If I would not have messed with her, I would not be in here.

-Sean B1

From The Beat: Regardless of whether you were just playing with this girl or really trying to mess with her, and even if you thought she wanted you to, you can't even play like you're forcing yourself on any girl, Sean. Everyone is really sensitive about abuse, so be careful and be respectful of any girl. When you're an adult, if a woman wants to be with

I Regret...

I regret coming here because my family is mad because I was going to do summer things with my family. I was going to LA this summer, and my big homie was going to take me to Ohio. But I got rapped up two days before I was going, so I messed up big time by being in here.

I was going on one more trip to hot August night with the homies, so next time I'm not going to mess up because I got things to do. So I should be home next summer.

-Lil' Clap B1

From The Beat: Well, you had things to do this time, but you messed up anyway. What's to keep you from messing up again next summer? What real changes will you make in your life so that you don't have to miss another summer of fun?

**All I can really
do right now
is be mad
at myself
for putting
myself in the
situation.**

Weekly Writings

I Love You, Bro'

What's up? You know who I talking to Bro'. I really miss you, Bro', I really think about you every day. Man, it ain't been the same since you left me.

Man, you got to do you out there and forget them fake-ass ninjas out there, you feel me? Lil' Bro', I really love you. Ask your mom. When I see her, all I ask is about you, Man. I can't tell you how much I miss you.

I be messing up for real, but you got to keep your head 'up 'cause this ain't coo' for real. They trying to play me. They trying to send me to the YA for a few years over some punk shhhh. Man. It seems like they don't want to see us out together on some real shhhh.

Forget that, Bro', we going to be out and ball out. You know me. I really love you. You my lil' cousin. You the one who really feel me. You the one I can tell everything to. You my family. I love you, and don't you ever forget that, Bro'.

-Tuna B4

From The Beat: Tuna, we have seen you in and out for a few times now, and we have watched you grow into a more mature young man. And, of course, your writing has improved a lot. Nevertheless, you have to keep in mind that the only person that is playing or even trying to play you is yourself. They might try to send you to the YA, and so what if they do? As long as you go there with a positive attitude, you will be out in no time and be chilling with your Bro'. One more thing — the Bro' you're addressing is younger than you, so when you do get out and go out with him, remember that you have to look out for him, and make sure he doesn't come back to the Hall, or worse. Good luck!

I'm Really Proud

I'm very proud of my lil' brah because he knockin' out his program, going to school, and wants to keep up on what he's doing. I love my brah, and I want to tell him not to trip because me and the fam gone hold him down forever. Bruh, it don't matter what change you make. I gone always love you.

-Diamond Pg B4

From The Beat: Glad your lil' bro' is doing so well.

I Know

I know my family sees me as a more sophisticated person that knows what my life has to offer and is not afraid to go after his goals. I don't know how society views me. Those in charge have made a decision that will change my life forever. I know that some in society may feel obscure around me, but they should not feel like that around me.

-Diamond Pg B4

From The Beat: So what are your GOALS, PG? We are very interested to hear them from you. And how do you plan to go about achieving them?

**Those in charge have made a decision
that will change my life**

"What Do They See?"

A Gangsta In Me

What do they see in me? They see a gangsta in me. They see me struggling in reality, for my life!

But I don't know if they see where I'm going in this life of mine. I don't know what they see in this gangsta in me. I know they can't see right through. So I'm thinking what they hell do they see in you or me.

Well, I really don't give a care what they see, or think of me. I don't care what they see in this hoo' gangster life we lead, 'cause it ain't never gonna stop.

They see my slangin' rocks on the spot. They see me rolling in G-rides all over the town. Well, I got to go. To those all over the bay, keep it alive. Late'.

-Lil' Augie

From The Beat: No one sees you outside this Hall. So, from what you say, you must be dreaming that nothing's changed. Or maybe you're just planning your future. But if that's the truth here, then you need to stop and look around — 'cause this will be your future: locked down. But it doesn't have to be like that. You need to step outside yourself to see, gangster life is not the only reality. Just get a job to earn your pay, and you'll see.

When You See Me

when you see me
yeah it's yo' boy lil' see-money
still doing my thang
getting this money
trying to stay out the way of all hatas
see i'm seventeen years old
and i got cake
for y'all who don't know what that mean
it's — money
see i know ninjas be hating
because i got it
and when i pull up on them dubbz
ninjas be like
look at see-money i'm'a get that ninja
all because when thei' girl see me
she wanna get in with me
'cause i'm stunning real hard
when you look at me
i want you to tell me what you see
i want a girl to tell me how she feels
about this young stunna
and you can holla at yo' boy
see i'm on my way to c y a for my stunning'
but they can't stop my shine
'cause i'm caked up
so that girl who's looking for that young
stunna
get at me i'm out

-See-money

From The Beat: You're calling out to Cupid when you're stuck on stupid! We quote: "I'm on my way to c y a for my stunning" — the justice system is not just funning with you! Plus if you go back to what you used to do, the haters will be twice as thick and twice as quick to drop a dime or speed a bullet. And after the Y where do you think the DA will try to send you? And you call that "shine"? You must be out of your mind! No cake in the pen, young friend. They're reserving a SHU just for you. Think again.

They See Me the Same

my family and friends
see me as the same person
that left an' the same person
that's comin' back
my family doesn't treat me wrong
they treat me the way
a human being
suppose' to be treated

-Craig

From The Beat: Now all you need to do, is get back to being who you're friends and family always knew you could be. Then when you're free, it will be just like it's supposed to be.

Only the Strong Survive

When people look at me, they see — a gangsta, a hustla, a pimp, a gangbanger, a soldier.

When the homies see me, they see a solid homie that got their back. They see a down homie that don't care, ready for whatever. They see me ridin' through the town smoking, drinking, jumping out of G-rides, smashing.

People see me that don't know me and be like, "He's crazy!" You can see me every day ridin' with my folks, just livin' that life to the fullest. You ask me why I'm this way? You ask me why I pack a strap and gangbang? Because I was born this way.

I'm going to continue to ride and pack straps till I die. You know why? Because only the strong survive.

-Young Dru

From The Beat: We understand that it's a mark of pride, even if you know where it goes, when you continue to ride. But don't put out that lie about "only the strong survive" — when you know for a fact, those who live like that, die young! Or if they do survive, then it's doing twenty-five in the Pen with a Life at the end. And when the little homies reading The Beat want to be just like you — it's straight tragedy. And you know it, too. So even if that's how you want to be, why write in The Beat? Can't you see?

You Get What You See

well what they see is what they get
an' what they get is what they choose
now what they choose i don't know
but what they get who knows
but whatever they see it will go-o-o
however they see it i don't know
however they get it it's gon' go
but whenever they choose it they better know
it's coming fast an' not slow

-Lil' Day-day

From The Beat: But if you slow your roll, what you get, you keep it whole; and loved ones know when you walk out the door, you'll be coming home again for sure. And your life won't slow to a crawl like it does when you come to Juvenile Hall.

what they get is what they choose

What I See

The questions what do they see, it's what do I see.

I view them differently, they view me differently. I try to understand and accept rights and wrongs that they can't accept. I will always love my family and vice versa regardless of whatever.

I just feel like some people will never be able to view me as the same person, but at the same time I will never view or put myself vulnerable in a situation with them.

-Cory

From The Beat: You are a strong guy, Cory. The only way to take charge of how people see you is by representing yourself how you want people to see you. It's out of ignorance that someone would judge you ONLY by knowing that you've been to the Hall. You have so many more dimensions to you. Remember that! What you choose to share is what people will know about you!

I Don't Care

I believe my family looks at me the same. I don't think they look at me differently just because I came to jail.

But the group counselors and staff that work in the Hall, be actin' funny when we speak to them. They be actin' like we straight criminals!

Other than family and them, I wouldn't really care about anybody else and what they think. I don't care what they think because they're not me. And if they want to see me 'cause they see me differently or 'cause they don't like me now, I say it's nothin', boy! If you got it, bring it and come see me, yo' army for this cavalry.

-Howard

From The Beat: It's okay to tell those gum-bumpin' fools that you don't fear them or care about what they say. But you need to learn how to say it another way besides calling them out like that, because you have no need to prove yourself to fools.

The Beast

Man, what they see in me? They see a beast. They see someone that don't care about nothing.

The courts say I'm a menace to the street so that's why they lock people like me up in the Hall. They don't care about me or you, so that's why I say I don't care about nothing. So that's what they see about me.

RIP John John, I Beam.

-Lil' Scoot

From The Beat: What do you see in yourself? Are you becoming what they see? Who are you? Do you care about yourself? You must care about something, what is it? If you want people to care about you, to see something other than a beast, you need to see yourself as something different. Right? You wanna see yourself as someone who does right, someone who cares about people, someone who respects himself, someone young folks look up to? Well, it all needs to start with how you see yourself. What do you think? Do we have a point?

I Don't Know

What do they see, I do not know.
But I do know what they do not see.

They do not see me as a person
that will give his all for the best of his people.
Maybe because I did things that the system did not like.

I can't tell you what they see,
but I tell you what they think.
They think I'm a screw-up in life,
but that's not right.
What do they see?

Not me,
because that's not me,
see, I had to feed myself.
Nobody gave me a hand,
nobody gave me help,
that's why at times I wanna get up on my knees
and ask for Jesus' help.
They can't see what I see
'cause what I see is lov in' life
something they may never see,
so what do they see.

-Cuttey

From The Beat: How can you get others to see what you see? We see a smart guy, who wants to do big thangs. We admire you. We can feel that you are a guy with a lot of love. Show this side to people. People will only see what you show them.

They Fell For Me

To me, in the eyes of my parents, and friends, and family I think they feel for me and want me to get out of here and do better in life.

Even though I'm in the Hall and may be viewed as a criminal and bad person for my crimes, but not in the eyes of my loved ones only the system. My family knows I made a mistake and they know when I get out I'll do better so they're by me 100%.

-Ashton-Adogg

From The Beat: Adogg, you are a lucky guy to have the support of your family. Do you think when you are a father, if your son finds himself in the Hall, you can be as forgiving?

"That Decision"**You Don't Hustle You Don't Eat**

That decision that I made was to help me survive in the streets, 'cause I was told, you don't hustle you don't eat and I really took that to the head.

By me going out sellin' narcotics and knowing the consequence for my action didn't change nothing, 'cause I had that mentality that I got to get money and don't play with the game.

So right now I have to deal with the consequence, which is eighteen-month minimum in Rite of Passage, which is in Nevada. So at the moment I don't care about nothing.

-Lil' Qb

From The Beat: Lil' Qb, you ARE dealing with the consequences. So now what? Do you feel like it was worth it? Are the consequences going to affect your decisions in the future? You are about to be sent to a program in Nevada, what's the next move? How do you want to live your life, what are your options?

Bad Decisions

I make a lot of bad decisions. But me coming here, I want to make some good decisions.

I know I will mess up again. But I really would like not to. Like me doing all the crimes that I know, I will do it again. But not the same kind of crimes, not bad as I have done. No more robberies no more bad crimes.

I always thought I was the best, that's what got Gypsy caught. I never thought I'd get caught. I hope I can learn from this, that I am not the best, and I can get caught.

-Gypsy

From The Beat: It seems like you've learned from this already. You got caught. If you want to make some good decisions, think about that. Is it really worth it? What about your choices, do you have another path in life that you can take? One that won't take you to the Hall or jail. What is the difference between a bad crime and a good crime? We may not agree with all the laws, but we need to stop and think first. We know the consequences, so we need to make our decisions based on that. What do you think?

Decisions

One of the decisions that I made that I remember is, when I was at the park playing hoop, when two of my cousins came up to me and asked me for a ride.

So I stopped playing hoop and was on my way to drop them off when I got pulled over and when they ran the numbers, the car came back stolen. But I don't steal cars I bought it from someone who used to be my potna.

I don't regret it though, because I am still living and that's all that matters.

-Young Beam

From The Beat: You can still have regret, and be grateful for your life. If it's your life, that matters, don't you want to make it a happy life, with your freedom? You must have some regret. You probably won't buy cars from people that you can't trust. Well, if you don't regret it, at least learn this lesson. We tend to think that a life outside of the Hall is much more productive, wouldn't you agree?

My Decisions

My decisions is not good. My decisions is bad all the time. I do not know one good decision I made that was good. I regret coming back to the Hall. I come back and back. I cannot stop. I came to the Hall 8 times. I cannot stop.

I think the reason is my environment. If I could get a job or enough money I probably could move out. I'm talking about Oakland. It's so bad. Last time I was out on the run — I was robbed a block from my house. Basically you can't trust no one except folks you've known for years. I'm telling you — it's crazy.

Like that time I was robbed I thought they were going to kill me, because dude made an excuse by saying "why you kill my lil' cousin?" Plus I didn't have any money on me. He took my brothers jacket, while I was on the ground face down like the way the police do it.

My goal is when I get out this time to get a job. I just turned 16 in here and 16 is when you can get a job.

-Lil' J

From The Beat: What a frightening piece, especially the part you speak about this dude who acted like he was going to shoot/kill you. We hope that you will get a job that you enjoy. Where do your interests lie career wise? What kind of occupation do you hope to have when you get older? When you have a job, do you think that you will stop you from coming back to the Hall for good?

The Worst Decision

The worst decisions I ever made, was when I committed the crimes to come here.

I regret that, if I would of just stayed in the house and finished getting my hair braided I wouldn't be in the predicament that I am.

-Sneed

From The Beat: Sometimes it's these small decisions in life that get us in trouble. We never mean to get caught up, but sometimes it just happens. So, the next time you see potential for some bullshh to take place, you'll think first, and decide if it's really worth it. Then we can read your piece titled "The Best Decision."

I always thought I was the best**That Decision**

Man, I'm in here for a reason. I ain't in here stressin', talkin' about what I should have done a long time ago. 'Cause I did the crime, I'm gon' do the time! You feel me?

I'm gon' man up to the consequences. Because it's a lot of ninjas out there tryin' to put in work, but when they get caught they won't to start crying like a little girl. And some of them even snitch when the police ask for information.

That's why I only mess with ninjas that's solid, and them the ones that's real. You feel me? Real ninjas made ninjas, you feel me? That's why most of these ninjas in jail for life now, 'cause thei' potna done snitched on 'em.

But you got to make that decision, either you in it or you not. I made my decision a long time ago, and I stuck with it and stayed solid through the hard times.

Like right now, I'm goin' to the Y on Thursday — and I ain't whinin' and poutin'! I'm stayin' solid. I ain't got Life, so I'll be out one day. I just got to make that decision.

And I want to say RIP to Lil' JJ, Greedy, Mat, Criddy-bo, B-bo, Ju-Ju, and ANT. See y'all when I get there.

-Lil' G

From The Beat: For sure you don't want to feel weak when you're heading off to the Y. You need to stay strong on the inside. But that has nothing to do with changing your mind about doing dirt and putting in work for a game that promises fame but delivers death, incarceration and shame. It takes a man to admit when he's wrong, and still stand strong. You don't have Life — yet! Put in work at the Y, and it still might be what you get. Now is the time to change your mind, man. And we're sure ANT would rather be with his twins, if he had it to do over again. And B-bo had started his change, ya know.

On the Envelope

don't wait for the one you can live with look for the one you can't live without don't frown because you never know who's falling in love with your smile don't cry because it's over smile because it happened the hardest thing in life is to watch

-Culero

From The Beat: When you find the one you can't live without, don't blow it by acting a clown, trying to show homies you're pimperish down.

My Life, My Life Two

My life was very good until I came to the Hall. I was having fun until I made a decision to rob somebody's house. Now I have to go to a group home.

I have been in the Hall for 76 days and a few hours. I messed up my life. That's my life.

-Lil' Kev

From The Beat: You haven't messed up your whole life but you've made a mistake. Can you right the wrong? How can you make it so that you never come back?

Stay Out For Good

I got a different reaction when I came out of Juvi. They all thought I was a bad ass, and that I was really scary! But the thing was, I was still me. I didn't change. Juvi didn't change me.

So I just told them. They were all like, "What is it like?" They asked a lot of questions. I just said, "I didn't like it." And, "I don't wanna talk about it." But they understood.

So don't come here, and no one will judge you. Okay? Later.

-Jj

From The Beat: You're writing to people who are already here. So what are you telling them? Don't come back? What about you? Why are you back?

Gato's Way of Life

You see my way of life is — you stick me, I stick you. You love me, I love you. I ain't the one to get over on. Nope! That ain't me, chump! Run that game on someone else.

You know I done learned a lot of knowledge in those streets, and for my good! I stay on ten toes, keeping trucha on the block with whatever I've got, understand me? I'm that homie that will do you scandalous if you deserve it. You know what I mean?

I don't trust no one in this cold game I play, 'cause I may crap out if I do. I stay hittin' sevens, you feel me, boy! This life is like a roll of dice, and it's gambling with your life. But you know what I say? That's the life I lead as this solid gangster! Ya feel?

Why they tryin' to send yo' boy to CYA? But hey, that's life. And it's also hoo' shhhh. Alrato.

-Young Gato

From The Beat: You say that what you've learned in the street is for your good? Please! Going to YA? That's good? And max out, 'cause you plan to represent just how down you can be? That's good? The game is cold and it's old. Save your life and your soul.

Weekly Writings

Two Months at Camp

I have been at Camp for about two months now, and I really don't like it. But for all those coming up here, Camp is like paradise compared to the Hall!

I have honestly learned a lot from this place. And for all of those that plan to run — it's not worth it! It really isn't. That's all I have to say. Stay up in there! Sincerely,

-B-rad

From The Beat: Sometimes the truth told simple and sweet, carries a message more powerfully. You said plenty!

Real Vampires

Drinking blood may be a horrible way to live, but it is not as strange as it seems. The only real vampires that we know exist today, are not humans. They are animals. There are several animals that feed on blood, including insects, leeches, and the famous vampire bat. the feeding habits of these animals may have led to stories about vampires turning into bat form at night.

Vampire Bats: The vampire bat lives in Central and South America. Like other bats, it is a mammal. It is the only mammal that lives on blood. The vampire bat is quite small, not much bigger than a mouse. It searches for sleeping animals with the use of echo-location.

Once the bat finds a victim, it drinks its blood. Its victims include large animals, such as cows and sheep. Because of its name and its two long sharp teeth, people often think the vampire bat uses its fangs, like a mythical vampire, to suck blood. In fact, the vampire bat does not use its teeth that way, and it does not kill its victims.

There is one theory about vampires that is based on science. Some doctors now think that people who were thought to be vampires, in fact had terrible diseases. This theory does not explain how mythical vampires could exist, but it does explain how some vampire stories might have started.

-Carleton

From The Beat: Now that we know that there's no such thing as a vampire, despite what we see in the movies, we can all sleep a little more soundly — unless we dream we're cows or sheep sleeping in an open field when the vampire bat is fluttering near. So, what personally interested you in this subject here?

How They See Me

Family and society should see me as a young man who made wrong decisions.

But I know my friends won't see me the same way, because I see that they show me more respect — but it's not like I ask for it; it's just what they do.

My girl looks at me the same, but her mom don't. Her mom thinks I'm a bad person, so she don't want me to be with her no more!

-Lil' Mono

From The Beat: When your friends treat you with more respect for having made a wrong decision, how does that affect your thinking? We're not saying your girl's mom is right, but maybe it's a process she's seen before — playing to the homies and messing up more.

Why Should I Feel This

the one you love
love someone else
oh well
truth to tell
you can't make
someone love you
all you can do
is be someone who
can be loved

-Culero

From The Beat: This little poem shows a wisdom that cannot be denied.

They Still Love me

My family still loves me. I think that no matter what I do or what happens to me, my family will always love me and be there for me — respect me for the way I am.

My friends still see me the same, because no matter what I do, they're still goin' to respect me for the way I am. Because they know that I know whatever they do — me, myself, I will always be there for them. And if I could help them solve a problem, why not be there for them?

My family and friends will never look at me different, because they got too much love for me. No matter what I do, my family and friends are always goin' to give me that unconditional love.

-Carlos

From The Beat: Your family will always love you, unconditionally — but will that love give them pleasure as they take pride in your accomplishments, perhaps your someday being a father with a good job providing for his own little family; or will that love be an abiding source of pain, because you put yourself so deep in the belly of the beast, the "correctional" system, that you've become all but a memory. And if you want to help your friends, help them find a way out of the revolving door of the system that always keeps locking them up for longer and longer stays.

What Is This Kid Thinkin'?

What's crackin'? It's me, that homeboy Gato. I'm 'bout to write on the topic this week — I think my family thinks different about me because I've been locked up lately. I know they like, "What the hell is this kid thinkin'?"

You would think that I like this place, as many times as I've been here! It's a shame, but it's that life I'm livin' in that East Bay varrio.

I've missed my lil' brother's birthday for the second year in a row. You know! His birthday was on July twenty-first, and I was locked up all last summer, too. And I know my lil' brother don't see that as coo' or anything!

I just hope I beat this case and go back to. Well, I just want to say what's up and much love and respect ... Alratos.

-Young Gato

From The Beat: It is a shame, and the life you're living is to blame. And you know what we're going to say: It's up to you to change! If not for your sake, then for your little brother. You want him to go through the same pain as you? Show him another way by what you choose to do (and not to do).

Bible Study

John 3:16

For God so loved the world
that He gave His only begotten
Son, that whoever believes in Him
should not perish but have eternal life
Ephesians 6:1

Children, obey your parents
in the Lord for this
is right. "Honor your father and mother,"
which is the first commandment
with promise: "That it may be well with you
and you may live long on the earth."
(All May Be Saved Now)

Revelation 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door and knock.
If anyone hears My voice and opens
the door, I will come into him and
dine with him, and he with Me.
(Needing Guidance)

Psalms 32:8

I will instruct you and teach you in the
way you should go; I will guide you
with My eye. Do not be like the horse
or like the mule, which have no
understanding,
which must be harnessed with bit and
bridle,
else they will not come near you.

-Danario

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing words of faith, guidance and consolation. Tell us what these passages mean to you in your life.

One to Our Ladies

i could never love someone
the way i love you
you say your pregnant with my baby
and i hope it's true
'cause i couldn't picture
having a lil' culero or a smokey junior
with anybody but you
we had our fair share of arguments
and there were lonely tears shed too
but whatever we go through
i will always love you
it might seem that i'm dissing you
in front of the homies
and i be with hella females too
but when it is time to go home with someone
mija — it's you

-Culero

From The Beat: Your children deserve better and your respective ladies do too. You're really dissing yourself if what you write is true. You're playing both sides, and in the end, there will be tears in your eyes. Time to realize it's real life.

A Beach In Brazil

people always say
things like —
do you ever feel
like getting away
from it all
i know what i need to do
get to a place i can escape to
where i can close my eyes
and close out any worries
and open up to more
peaceful things
i close my eyes and i'm there
lying on a beach in brazil
without a care

-Lil' Shawn

From The Beat: Then you don't want to go during Carnaval, 'cause it's way too exciting. Or then again, maybe you do. Close your eyes and think it through.

Mega Love Ya

boo when i get home
i want a hundred proof
no beer
forget the judge
i'm a spit on this little year
till i get out
keep yo' chedda bob
in the cuts
when i get out
they gon' be mad as what
we already got the world
in our hands
what else is next
if you ever see a female
speaking on me
better put her in check
you gon' be right with me
when i'm making hits
i'll put a rock on yo' finger
that's gon' break yo' wrist
boo represent that
mega love ya ish
you went from is you ready
to always ready
when i say forever i mean forever
and a day in life with a ninja
holding it steady
boo the world ain't even
ready for us
i know life right now
is kind of heavy for us
when we see them old-school haters
we gon' profile and hit the pedal
they gon' smell the rubber
and wish they was on our level
the rest boo you already know
i'm just trying to express my feelings
before they close my do'
m a and young j
ya know

-Young J

From The Beat: Your rhymes are fine, and your feelings come through line by line. The love you feel for MA is not the problem with what you say. But pretending that this year doesn't count and that you can just wait it out, and everything will be just like it was — no, you need to put every thought you ever held on pause! This is not about the judge; it's all about you. 'Cause the judge won't blink an eye when he puts you in a SHU, but you will lose everything you love. So for MA's sake and your own, you need to rethink all of the above if you want your love to grow.

**you went from is
you ready
to always ready
when i say forever
i mean forever**

My Life

What's up people, this be Lil' Dm. Damn, the Hall is hella boring. I should have listen to my girl that night and never went to steal a car — just to make some fast money. Now I am locked up.

People if y'all never been here don't think coming to the Hall make you cool — because it don't. It's hella boring. I miss my mom, dad, brothers, and my girl. I ain't coming back to the Hall ever again.

When I get out I'll stop smoking weed, stealing cars, robbing houses, getting drunk and I'll start listening to my family more. Aite I am out. Peace out.

-Lil' Dm

From The Beat: What can you do to make your Hall time productive? Time, much like life is what you make it — so whattya gonna do with your time? When you get out — what are some positive things you wanna get into?

Family

The people in my family still look at me the same. My mom loves me no matter what I ever did.

My dad just looks at me like I'm nuts! My little brother and sister love me even more now that they don't see me at home with them.

My friends can't wait to visit me. They all got my back till the day I pass. They miss they boy, and they can't wait until I hit the streets again that's if I hit the streets one more time.

-Andrew

From The Beat: After reading this piece, we have a feeling that we'll be seeing you in Juvenile Hall more often than not. If you want your family to be missing you then you ain't got no love for them.

Who's Gonna Catch You?

you can fall from the sky
you can fall from the tree
but the best place to fall
is in love with me
baby i will always be there
to catch you and to
love you always

-Culero

From The Beat: To be there, you need to be free. So change the way you make money — and you will be.

Full of Sin

talkin' about
a thug life
i'm about
sinnin' and never
thinkin' about
what's right

-Emmy-bo

From The Beat: (Tupac) "THUG LIFE: the hate u give little infants f—ks everything."

Girl

Man, I know we haven't had a lot of time to be alone, so when I get out it's just going to be me and you by ourselves.

Nobody else is going to be allowed just me.

-Jeremy

From The Beat: How can you make the time you spend with your girl special? Maybe the best way is to work on bettering yourself and staying out of places like the Hall!

No More

the things i used to do for money
i used to love gettin' paid
i used to love to do robberies
and home invasions
steal cars steal clothes
till one day it came to an end
i did a robbery and got arrested
now i'm locked up
thinking of all the bad things
i did to those people
i've been living a life of crime
for four years
now i'm locked
i'm writing to the beat
folks say crime pays but
it don't pay
my biggest regret
is wishing i didn't get involved
with this female
but anyway this female
snatched on me
i loved her
i gave her all my trust
i been with her a year and a half
then she crushed me up
i used to get high on all type of drugs
i used to get high on coke and weed and ex
that's it i got to go now
i'm go to the y a so that's it
bye now stay up

-Danny Boy

From The Beat: Four years of getting high, too? Four years of living like a crazy fool, out of your mind and doing crimes time after time. We're sure it hurt when your lady turned on you, and we're sure it felt like real love, too. But living the way you were living, you couldn't even know you; so how could you know if the love was true? We're just saying, you have a chance — even at YA — to get your mind straight. Learn a trade and get a job to get paid. And next time you fall in love, do it the right way. Okay?

RIP

Rest in peace Boo, Boogie, Mark, Hugo, and many more. One love

-Lil' Rickie

From The Beat: How can you make sure that you don't join them soon?

Moving On

It's usually in the right time
It's usually at dawn
Well now the time to tell you
Girl, I am moving on.
The time was great
while it was here
I know you don't want to hear it
but now I drink beer
I know we have some problems
why don't we settle them?
I wish that our unborn child
Turns out to be a him.

-Bilal

From The Beat: Even if the two of you aren't together, we're sure it's your goal to be there for your child? How much support do you have from family. Raising a child is going to be the biggest responsibility of your life, don't mess it up! Use or find resources that can help. Do you plan on continuing to drink beer when your baby is born? Why do you want a boy and not a girl?

To All Youngstas

Man, stay out of trouble because it's easy to get into, but it hard to get out of.
In short, think before you act, because it's better to have a life and learn, then to not learn at and keep bein' stupid all the time.
The system is a trap. So stay clear of the system all they want is money.
To all young Black males all over America; stay in school. Being locked up is not fun at all.
Right now the county say that they are broke and they are laying off all the cool staff because of budget cuts.
-George
From The Beat: George, this is some good advice that you're giving. Is this something you've learned during your time here in the Hall? Do you think that you would've listened if someone told you this, before your little visit here? Your words are wise. Do you take your own advice, will you? As for staff, we too will miss the cool ones. Tell us about your favorite staff person(s).

Missin' You

To my baby girl, Amanda, who I miss so much
Baby, I am missing you so much
Sittin' in here mad because I can't feel your touch
Wishin' I could hug and kiss you so much
I never realized how much you mean to me
Missin' you wishin' I could be free
You know you mean the world to me
When I get released my mind will be at peace
Because I'll be with you!
You know I love you, you're my boo
I'll never call you a name or physically or emotionally hurt you
Like, I said I'll always be with you
I'll never leave or go back to the Hall
I hope we be together
Always and forever
Some people call me soft but I don't care
Because they will never know the love we share
You my angel from above that God sent to me for me to find love
I love you
See you soon. Your baby boy,

-Baby Boy

From The Beat: You write a beautiful poem to Amanda. Sounds to us like you're a really nice guy and you sure know how to treat a woman. Do you write her poems a lot? Why don't you send her this one? We're sure it would bring a smile to her face. How can you let her know that she's more important to you than the stuff that got you locked up?

What Up Muchachas?

This is Perico from Oakland. Como estan ustedes, yo ando bien.

I'm chilling doing my time, but it's nothing for a boss player, ya' know! They trying to give me a couple of years. But I'd rather run from the law because I'm still young and thuggin'.

When I'm eighteen I could seal my juvenile case and do less time. Why? Because they don't have shhh on me. They tried and tried to catch me slippin'.

I learn from the best and the ones that already experience it. I just have a contract with the court or PO and go to a lot of programs and classes. And even kiss butt with the law. Pimpin!!

-Perico

From The Beat: Perico, come on now! You do not want to roll the dice and run from the law. Not only is that a bad decision, but also why would you tell people? We know that you are smarter than that. Sometimes we all feel desperate, but just like you say, you are still young, and you need to think about that. You have your whole life ahead of you. Hopefully it will be a long happy life. You have control over that. The decisions that you make now, you will pay for later, or you will experience the benefits from. It's all up to you. You have the power to make the right or wrong decisions. Think first!

The Way It Is

I was a menace in the world, I had God watchin' my back,
My money came from selling dope and putting females on the track.
Now that I'm locked up, my mind is running round in circles,
Wishing I was with my boys getting perked and smoking purple.
I want to be free so I can have my family on the side of me.
But the judge and the D-A don't think I'm ready for society.
So now I have to serve my time, in the meantime, maintain.
Stay on the right side of the law, friend, the system ain't a game,
It's designed to screw us up, yeah, to hit us where it hurt,
And when we released, it's hopeless, cause we can't find no work.
So stay up, stay hopeful, and pray to God above.
Because we've only got this far due to His mercy and His love.

-J-Remy

From The Beat: J-Remy, where do you see your life going now? God has been watching your back; so now what do you think He/She has in mind for you? Where is your life going? How do you define freedom? How are you going to get your freedom? You said you feel like when you get out, "it's hopeless". Hopeless to find work? Well, always have faith. You have God on your side. When you think positive, positive things have a way of coming our way, and vise-versa.

What They Say

Family say I need to stay out, while friends scream haww life. My family show no loss of love. My homies show no loss of love.

They all see me as the same person, smart but also a person with a lot of drama in his life. An angry, emotional person, also a hustler down for whatever, and down for his family and friends. They don't fear me just like I don't fear them. They don't disrespect me and I don't disrespect them, and I always believe things will not change between us.

I treat family like family and my family most of the time treat me like family. I treat my ninjas like brothers and my ninjas treat me like a brother. And for my ninjas locked down and all my young hawks locked down, one love. Shot to young Tip, one love.

-Young Sochie B4

From The Beat: Sochie, you said you treat your family like family and they sometimes treat you like family. What do you mean by that? Also, you said you were smart and down for whatever, but a smart person will not let his/her freedom be taken away to be told by others when to eat, sleep, play, and use the restroom. And as for being down for whatever, are you down to go to the Y or the Pen, or even maybe spending life in prison? Think hard before you respond.

They All See Me Differently

My fam look at me like I am stupid.

My ninjas look at me like I made a stupid move.

My girl has eyes of desire because I been gone so long.

The police got eyes of oppression because they think

I'm gone cause problems.

Everybody see me different

because we're all different.

-Diamond Pg

From The Beat: This is interesting, PG, but it would be far more interesting if you explained each perspective. Why does your family think you're stupid (we know you're not); why do your ninjas think you did something stupid; why is your girl straying; why do the police think you're going to cause problems? And what does Pg see when he looks at Pg?

On the outs

Ninjas always talking about they wish they was at home. No disrespect, but ninjas know if they was out on the streets they would not even be in the house.

They say they miss their family and wanna kick it with them. But they would not even spend a lot of time with them.

-Tru B5

From The Beat: You may (or may not) be right about those you're talking about, but you can't change anyone's behavior but your own. No disrespect, TRU, but we guess from this that you're one of those who also wishes he was at home so that you could go back to doing whatever got you here in the first place. We wish that wasn't true, TRU, because we know where that leads, even if you don't.

What They Think, What I Think

I think I get out of here and go to Walden House tomorrow after doing two months in YGC. So when I do my 90 days in Walden House I'm going with my mom I think when I see my friends, they're going to think that it was cool. "You're some shhh," like that.

I don't think that it was cool at all, but my mom is going to be very happy for me. So when I get out, I am going to stop smoking trees and stop drinking. That will make my mom happy and my brother and sister happy too.

-Jay B4

From The Beat: Yes, it will make your mom very happy just to have you with her, and to see that you're not getting high or drunk all the time will make her even happier. It will also be good for you, for your growing body and brain, and for your future. Take advantage of everything Walden House has to offer, and when you get out, just remember how much you owe your mom, and what she wants most from you. Good luck!

Last Call

What's really good with ya? I been down fo' ten months, so I can't really get with ya, but I'll tell you my life and how it is.

When I came to the halls, straight stacking my chips, I saw it all Ninjas came up in here shot up and roughed up, and all and one thought he was hard. But he ended up soft. Then it went to a ninja that started sticking shhh on his walls. And then them fake-ass thugs and gangstas be coming in and out the halls.

How you goin' sit with ya enemy, and talk how they are? if you rep a block you better rep it far, and them ones thinking and acting like they the boss. But you ain't no factor, you just a dummy with a gun, because being a thug ain't fun.

Just stick to schooling, boy, and you will find a bright future because you don't want to die by somebody else shooting ya.

-Jd B5

From The Beat: In fact, at your age — and the age of everyone in the Hall — you don't want to die by any means. It's one of the mysteries we'd like explained, which is why so many people your age seem so willing to die by the gun (or kill by the gun), not to mention giving up their God-given right to freedom. But with your powers of observation and story-telling, you'll be able to explain it...

I Feel

I feel that life is not fair because if it was, I would not be in here, and I am tired of this shhh. If somebody can work like God, please help me get the heck out of here.

-Renee GU

From The Beat: We think the closest person to God you're going to find in here is you. You're the only one who has the power to change your actions and your attitude. Honestly, what do you think your first step should be?

Stop The Beef: A Rap

City to city block to block

We need to stop the beef

Trust me 'cause I lost two homies to the streets

I'm stuck in the beef

So I ride with my heat

And I write to The Beat

So I can keep sane

And I sip HQ and Henn

To hide the pain

Caught up in the game

I never say no names

Trying to keep my life

On track like a train

-Young Slim B4

From The Beat: Slim, coo' rap, but how are you going to stop your own beef? To use your analogy of keeping the train on track, we don't see how you can do that if you're strapped, stoned, and stuck on the block. Trains can race out of control. Trains sometimes crash. We think you could help yourself (and avoid a train crash) by slowing it down, keeping a clear head (which alcohol destroys), and lying low. On the other hand, we hope you keep writing to The Beat so you can keep sane...

Stop Playing

People could get they life to be real if they stop playing these lil' games and just be about they business without getting in others' way. I feel if everybody was to get on they money hype that ninjas wouldn't have time to funk. It's too much money out in them streets. But I like they way that these ninjas is movin'. They staying out of me and mine, so I ain't got no problem 'cause my fam and me gone keep getting money;

-Diamond Pg

From The Beat: We get frustrated with your writing, Pg, because although you turn in a lot of pieces, mostly they don't say very much. We would like to see you write a longer piece that requires you to think more deeply, to dig more deeply, to reveal more specifics, more examples, and more details of the subject you're writing about. We sometimes think you are playing the little games you want people to stop playing. But we're not sure, since you don't explain what you're talking about. In the case of The Beat, quality (going beneath the surface) beats out quantity every time.

See Y'all

I'm headed to CYA fo' four years, but my max will be three years, because I got time served in here for a year, so I'm good! This is my last step to get my freedom back. If I do good, I'll be out next year at the front door of The Beat!

I'm just happy because I know I'll be out some day, so this is to all my ninjas that help me get through this hard time up in B5, keep ya head up. Y'all be out.

'Bout the time this piece get in, I'll probably be gone. So, fo' all y'all wannabes up in here, stay out the game, because the streets will eat you up fo' something' stupid. The fake ninjas is the ones that get clapped by startin' somethin' in jail you can't finish on the outs.

Use your mind. Peace. I'm gone. CYA — See Y'all ninjas when I see ya!

-Jd B5

From The Beat: We're really sorry we didn't get to say good-bye properly, JD, especially because we know we can't send you The Beat inside CYA. We also regret that you got shipped out before you saw your incredibly powerful play performed by Each1Reach1. We had the pleasure of being there, Jd, and the audience applauded wildly for your play. Keep your nose clean, and we'll be looking for you at our door when you parole.

Home

Selling dope
making c-notes

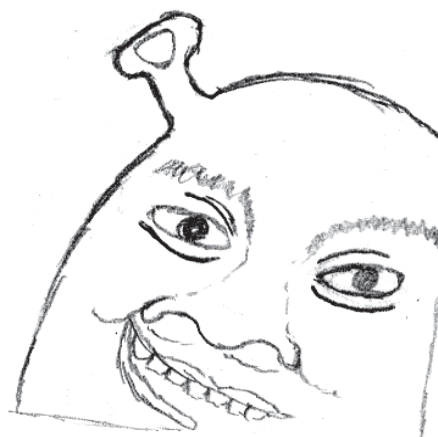
on the block running from po-pos

In the game shacking folks

I'm telling you everything I miss 'bout home

-Tru B5

From The Beat: We appreciate your honesty, but honestly if these are the things you miss about home, we'd be willing to bet what we have that you'll be missing these things for much of your life — while your in the Hall, in jail, in prison, or in a wheelchair... Think about it.



**If I do good, I'll be out
next year at the front
door of The Beat!**

What They Don't Know

They don't know who I am
 They don't know what I been through
 They don't know what I seen
 They don't know where I sleep at night
 They don't know how hard it is to walk a block to the corner store
 They don't know the shhh I go through every day
 They ain't never walked a day in my shoes
 They never came and knocked on my door and asked my problems and concerns
 So what do they know?
 Shhh! Ask me, and I'ma say the don't know shhh about shhh.
 They think they know but they have no idea

-Tru B5

From The Beat: We think you're mostly right, Tru. Those that judge you haven't walked in your shoes, don't know what your problems, and haven't seen what you've seen. But if we flip your script upside down, can you say that you know them (whoever "they" are)? Do you know their problems and concerns? Have you walked in their shoes? Do you know who they are or what they've been through? Isn't this a two-way street?

Ay, Guess What?

Aye, G-vo? This is Marina from dat ol' San Francisco. Anyways, I have to say that I am ready to be up out of this hell. On the 29th of July, I am going to Colorado for one year if I do a good job.

But this is going to be a bit different. I have been to 17 placements and I can't take this shhh no more. I'm 'a go home afterwards. Then I will be going on 18 and a old staff I know is hooking it up wit' a job at Kaiser working in computer management — 15 dollars an hour, so that's cool. But if I can do it, y'all can, so stay up.

-Gata GU

From The Beat: Sounds like you're ready to handle business. What do you worry about being the biggest obstacle to you completing this program? What's messed you up in the past?

My Mystery Man

(Dedicated to Louie)

My mystery man,
 the one I think about day and night,
 the one that brings thoughts to my mind.
 Just by reading your letters,
 you bring butterflies to my stomach.

My mystery man, could all your words be true?
 Or am I just in another fairytale story.
 Are you the man I've been looking for all my life?
 Every time I hear your name,
 my eyes sparkle like the stars at night.

My mystery man, are you what I picture you to be?
 Are you down to be with me and only me?
 Can you make me feel loved and warm inside like you said?
 I want to be the one to hold you when the whole world is fallin' on you.

My mystery man, I want to be the one to comfort you when you're sad
 And like you said, even thugs cry.
 Can I be the one to put a smile on that face of yours?
 I will show you loyalty and love.
 Just don't break my heart.

My mystery man, my heart is open to you and only you. I got dreams and goals, and I want you to be a part of it. Just like I want you to be a part of my life. Just let me ask you a question before I end this,
 Can you handle my love?
 One love.

-Alicia GU

From The Beat: What does this mystery man offer you? What do you want from him? We worry a little about you just wanting to take care of him.

What Do They See?

Fo' a while, Man, I've been down 15 months. I don't know about the homies still on the run, taking care of their responsibilities. They got they own life so I'm trying to make some future plans fo' myself. I'm expectin' my prima (cousin) do the same once she touches down in Colorado. Time is nothin'. Real gangstresses and gangstas do time and get out.

I hope my people don't see me as the same person, because I don't want you to expect the same frontline Weasel that used to put in work. I done did my dirt and got away squeaky clean. I'm trianglin' up. Y'all know solid at the bottom and sharp at the top. That's how it's suppose to be.

Never could my homies turn they back 'cause I'ma soldier that they somewhat fear, but will always show the utmost respect. The name will always be a name to be respected.

-Weasel B5

From The Beat: We stand behind you in your effort to create a solid foundation to build on for your future, and we appreciate you're not the same Weasel you used to be. At the same time, we want you to know that it is far more important that you respect yourself than that anyone else respect you or your name. If you act respectfully, you will earn respect, whatever you've done in the past. You're on a path, Weasel. Keep walking forward.

I hope my people don't see me as the same person

Not For Me

Well, after all, being locked up is not fun. For a lot of folks, it's very stressful, but for me, it was stressful, but again, helpful because, sorry to say this, but jail has made me sit for a long minute, made me think about my lifestyle and what I want in life.

I have a son; I don't want my son going to jail, and I don't want to have to go through what I have put my mother through.

-Babybread GU

From The Beat: Good, honest piece. We bet your mom would like to read this, especially if you are serious about living a lifestyle that won't involve incarceration. What do you need to do or not do to live a positive lifestyle?

Pride

You can strip me of my clothes
 and leave me shivering in the cold
 You can deprive me and isolate me
 and take me away from the people I love,
 You can starve me and harm my body and all of the above.

You can make me stress, take away my happiness
 You can hurt me until I'm insane,
 'til I won't be able to function my brain
 You can load me up with drugs,
 though it won't take away the pain, or relieve my membrane.

While you're warm in your house,
 you can put me out in the rain.
 You can threaten my life with your words,
 and destroy me with swords or beat me up with cords. But something you will never, ever take away from me is my pride.

-Gata GU

From The Beat: Strong piece, but what gives you this pride? Where does it come from? Describe what pride means to you.

In And Out

See, I have been here like six times and shhh, but it's all cool, because there all a lot of girls in here rushing to get out, but I been here six times and I'm not really in a rush to get out of here because the projects still gon' be the same. To me, ninjas still gon' be grinding, the shhh is gon' be the same. See, I live in Fillmore, feel me, so the shhh is real boostie, feel me, and every time I come back, I see the same people, and I am not trying to do shhh fo' me to come back, because people is getting played, so I gotta straighten up to stay out.

-Lil' Sweetie GU

From The Beat: You are right about everything you say here — the only thing that's going to change is you. Are you going to stop grinding or find new friends, go to school, get a job?

That Kid

Once upon a time there was a good kid. Everybody knew that he was a good kid, but one day the kid did something bad. Then he had to go to Juvenile. He got out on Thursday, then he robbed a store. He got out on Saturday; then he started smoking weed on the same day. Now he has to stay in an institution for years and that's his third strike.

-Maurice B1

From The Beat: Maurice, are you writing about yourself or someone you know? Why did the kid rob a store the same day he won his freedom? How old is he? What is his home life like? Why does he keep messing up as soon as he's free? Did he get three strikes for three felonies he's been charged with? Smoking weed is not a felony, so did he do something else while he was high? Is he looking at 25-to-life?

To All The Fallen

Damn, it feels like just yesterday when we were all on the block, pulling all-nighters and downing our drank. Y'all was all ridas, down for anything. We were all a big familia.

Nothing has been the same en el barrio without you guys. I remember we use to cagar el palo for the hell of it. Y'all laced me up and taught me to never be a sucka and stand up to what I believe in.

Now I see new booties and young bucks that don't know why are they gangbangin, and I thank y'all for the knowledge que me dieron (you gave me). Now it's time for me lace these youngstas and let them know what's real. Until we meet again. One love.

(Dedicated to Caballo, Sav', Lil' Jimmy, Boxer, Chuky, Eliot, Vicious, OC).

-R GU

From The Beat: Can you imagine lacing these youngsters on staying in school, getting an education, and keeping themselves legit? We're heard you say you wish you had been a better role model for your sister. What about these kids?

Get Me Out Of Here

This place is gay and I want to get out of here.

-Damon B1

From The Beat: Do you think you might be able to squeeze a couple more sentences out the next time, so you have a real piece for us? When you use the term "gay," we don't think your talking about sexual orientation, are you? What does it mean in this piece? And, if you want to get out of here so bad, why did you come in the first place? How will you stay out the next time?

Well, after all, being locked up is not fun.

I Should Have Listened

The biggest decision of my entire life was the littlest thing.

If I would have listened to my homie when he told me to finish smoking that chop with him instead of half.

If I would have listened I wouldn't be going into six months of being here fighting a 707 for the worst case scenario.

Damn! Whoever said weed can't do nothing for you is a liar.

-paypa bound B4

From The Beat: We are humans and humans make mistakes sometimes. Even though you are fighting a 707 doesn't mean your life is over, nor is it too late to change or listen, know what we mean? We're not clear about the situation that led you here, because you don't really discuss it. (You're not here for smoking a chop, are you? We're guessing that there's a bigger mistake you made a little later...) Anyway, always keep the hopes up because that's the only way you will succeed in life.

So Fast

It all happened so fast
When we met

And the three weeks that we spent
together
I will never forget

It happened so fast
The days that I spent with you
Went by in a flash

I just left a man of one year
That put me through so much pain
And now that I'm locked up
And away from you I'm goin' more
insane

It happened so fast
I was just with you
and it seems just the other day
And now I'm being sent away

This separation between us won't last
But everything happened so fast.
(Dedicated to Gues)

-Lil' Gues

From The Beat: This is a lovely poem, but we're worried about you jumping into another relationship right away rather than focusing your energy on yourself. For example, what is it about you that made you stay so long in your previous relationship even though it caused you so much pain? Or, why do you think you keep running instead of finishing your programs? Focus on you, too, then you'll be ready for a relationship once you get out.

**All I can
do is
change
what's in
my future.**

They Don't Know How We Feel

It's my fourth time here, and I think I'm the same. I haven't changed. I think it doesn't help me, because they don't know how we feel and what we went through. They think just by locking you up you're going to change. But I haven't.

-Jovanny B1

From The Beat: Doing whatever you did that got you arrested, did you hurt anyone? Steal from them? Assault them? If so, how do you think that person felt? Can you imagine how victims feel? Why haven't you decided that nothing's worth your freedom? What's so valuable to you, that it means more to you than being free? Why don't you write The Beat Within and tell us how you feel and what you've been through, so people can understand you? Also, if this system doesn't work to bring about the change in you it's designed for, what would you design? What would work?

Home Away From Home

Damn! I'm back in and this is my fifth time in here. This time I got in for stealing a car at night. I forgot to turn on the headlights. I ain't go'n be going home this time, 'cause my PO said he trying to send me to the Ranch.

-Bg B1

From The Beat: Are you having some difficulty figuring out what keeps bring you back here, or do you like it here? If you've been here five times, maybe it's becoming like a home away from home. You'd better check yourself before you find yourself comparing institutions — the Halls, county jail, state prison! That's the progression, and if you keep it up, that's the treadmill you've chosen!

A Rap Star Falls

I used to push the cocaine.

Yes, I did back in '99, wit' the homie Steve.

I was feeling like the man getting lit wit' my ninja,
tacked out on the block.. Young ninjas running from the
boys, Hoping I don't get caught.
My ninjas let me in the car door
"What you breathin' so hard for?"
Ninja, you know I'm hard-core.

I push cocaine

And the boys raided the block fifty deep when they
came

And now I'm feeling the pain

Sellin' coke with homie, I felt like arRap star

'Til they separated my team.

-Deonte B1

From The Beat: Sorry, Deonte, that we had to take a few of your lines out for the usual reasons. At the same time, we're not sure whether you plan to change your behavior when you get out of here because you realize you and your ninjas will end up in jail, or worse, if you keep it up, or whether you think when you all get together again, you can resume your old ways. We sure hope that isn't your plan, because as sure as you resume past behavior, you can expect past results. If you come back here, or worse, you can't say you didn't know what the consequences would be.

Changed Perspectives

I think when a person gets out of jail, people who know him usually suspect something like that from that person, so they probably won't be surprised. But even if they wouldn't suspect for a person to go to jail, they still know him, because he/she is close to them.

If people that don't know you very well found out that you went to prison, then they would change their perspective of you.

-Mark B1

From The Beat: What would someone suspect of a person who just gets out of jail, Mark? If someone suspects that person just coming out of jail will probably cause more trouble, do you think that's fair to the person? Do you think that person should get a clean slate, because he's paid his debt to society, or would you be suspicious of a person recently out of jail? How do you think your parents, friends, girlfriends, prospective employers will treat you, if they know you were in Juvy? How do you think they should treat you?

Never Come Back

I want to get out of here and never come back. But me and my bro' got to go for a minute.

Oh RIP, Dianna and Matt that Cat.

-Dub B1

From The Beat: Hasn't being in Juvy taught you anything? You don't want to spend your young life in Juvy, the Ranch or YA — or San Quentin, Folsom, or Pelican Bay — so can you forget the game? You don't want the game to play you! Or do you?

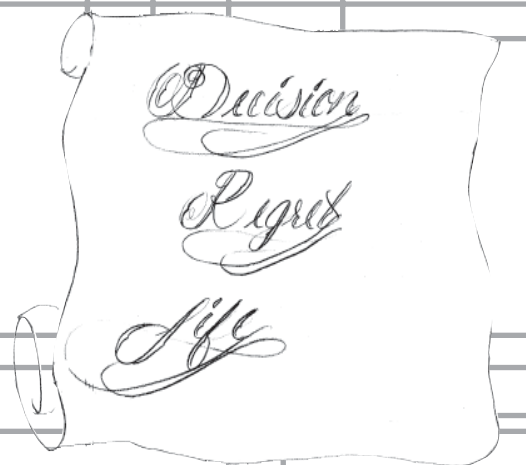
Different Strokes

The decision I made was meeting someone. We were about eight years old in this MESA program at SF State. I had \$10, and I wanted to go to the beanery. The staff wouldn't let me, so this person let me get some of their salami sandwich, and we've been friends ever since.

Ever since 2003 we've been cool, but it's different strokes for different folks. I changed associates more than the four seasons, know what I'm talking 'bout? I also wish the person would stop trying to deliver messages to me in the mail, because I don't want to have nothing to do w/ that person. So stay strong; stay back.

-Afro B4

From The Beat: We wish you had gone into some more detail in this piece, Afro. We have no idea why meeting this person is so significant in your life, and why you now want nothing to do with him (or her). We would be slow to abandon a friend who shared his (her?) salami sandwich with us, so something serious must be at the hear of this. What is it? What are those "different strokes" you talk about?



Bad Past Decisions

When I was on the other side of these walls, I made decision that could and did affect a lot of people, such as taking my girlfriend with me everywhere. I did that even though a lot of people can be affected, and a lot of things can happen when she is with me.

But that was the only person I could trust with my life when I was out there on them streets because even though you might leave yo' house or block with hella homies, when it all go down, it only you and whoever rode closest to you.

That is not the only decisions that I made on a daily basis when I was out on the streets. I made a decision to be an entertainer to my peers and people around me a few years ago. That decision put me where I'm at now, and made me a lot of enemies.

Those are two of the decisions I made, and I can't go back on them. All I can do is change what's in my future.

-Leek B5

From The Beat: Yes, Leek, you can change what's in your future, and you can use the past to make the changes you see as necessary. Regrets are only useful if they guide you to a different future, one where you don't have to regret your decisions, but can be proud of them, along with making your loved ones proud of you.

There's Better Days

Yeah! Mona is back in The Beat one time. Damn, there's been a lot of things going on fo' me. First of all, after eight months being in Juvi, I'm finally touchin' down on August 6, and I really don't wanna leave because there's a lot of home girls in here who I'm a miss very much. I have learned a lot; from right to wrong.

I just wanna tell my real homies to stay up always walk wit yo' head up high and don't let no one — hear me? — no one get you down. Stand tall like a souljah; please stay on your own two feet. Much love to all of the staff and homies.

Creepy: stay true and never give up trying to get where you wanna be. Remember, there's always better days. Much love and respeto.

Clumsy: dang girl, stay coo' homie. Remember, don't let no one get you down. I'll miss you and remember I got yo' back, ay?

Denise: what it do lil' homie! Dang, I'm happy for you D that you're ahead of the game — stay up!

Kelly: I'm glad you didn't get a CYA shot home girl. Stay up, stay strong.

Smiley: what's up. I'll see you afuera (out there). Te cuidas animal al rato (Take care of yourself).

Whisper: damn mija! I'ma miss you Buddha! Stay true homes — keep walking straight, don't look back aight! Take care, don't pull no code threes. Much love, your jefa (homie) al rato.

Nancy, Q-vo animal! I miss you ruca (girl). Stay strong, hay te guacho (see you later).

Lil' Face Elizabeth: What's up caritas! Te bañas, animal (take a shower). Take good care of yourself. I'm here fo' you siempre (always), okay? I'll holla!

China: Q-Vo prima (cousin). I'm glad God gave me a chance to see you once again. Te alivianas (take it easy), okay! Stay up ruca. Much love.

And to all of east unit, stay strong — soon you'll see da daylight. Much love, I'll see ya'll on the betta days. Much love and full respeto. Mona is out. Al rato.

-Mona

From The Beat: Damn, Mona — we feel you on your shoutouts 'cause we know you from workshops and know that your messages are all good, but we'd love to see you come with more from your heart, about yourself. How are you going to handle yourself when you do touch down (in a matter of days)? Your transformation from gangsta girl to a young woman with a different outlook is inspirational, and we wish more people could hear about it so that they might be inspired as well?

I have learned a lot; from right to wrong.

Michoacan

Michoacan, a place to be just you and me
But you far away can that be
I want to take you to Michoacan
To spend time and have a little fun
Come quick; let's get away from here
Go down to Michoacan to have no fear

But to live in Michoacan is not the place
So many problems, it will give you a sad face
But Michoacan is still the place I want to be
Come quick lil' mama and come with me
Let's go to Michoacan and make it reality.

-Chino

From The Beat: This is a sweet poem to Michoacan, and you add to it's richness by admitting that it will give you a sad face even as you want to go there and make it reality. What keeps the Bay Area from being the place to spend time and have a little fun, from being a place where you have no fear? What will it take to make a place like Michoacan a reality?

The Decision That I Regret

The decision that I regret from the future
now I only got the past to think about
in with the white walls

things I have saw the flaws
in the system that never heard of

Everything is different
the way it can't be my way

things I can't say

I regret not knowing the rules

I know what wrong there in songs

and to hear over the phone

Love is not for me

hate is all inside

I am trying to fight and do what's right

But I turn that left

fell into mess that I got caught up in

but is this sin?

No questions, only test of what to do

I see I only see my knees

the floor so clear

but when I look through toward the doors

I see a lock that has no key

and I have to pay a fee

to see a tree

But not to get to me is choice I took

now I wonder why is it the question we're going to ask

will people try to put on a mask

so quick so fast

that this happened to me when I read

he he

when I was a little thing

Can't happen to that are good looking

not begging sad

just glad that it's over

that my life is more than a floater

please don't lean on my shoulder

'cause I will fall over

I wise life can be more that it is

to this day I wish it would start over

but I can make the best

It seem like the dream fading

I am just saying that I can't sustain this fever

but I can't leave her

it's too late to deacease her

wash away

take away

but leave me be

and make to be free of my decision.

-Berry

From The Beat: Once again, wordplay with meaning is the order of the day. The words in your piece seem to be like fish, flopping around and evading your controlling grasp — except that you gain complete control for moments, for lines that shimmer. Whose shoulder can you lean on when you're feeling unstable? How can you make the best? What is the decision you seek to make? The fog clears for moments, and we like what we see.

Out There

I'm tired of being in here

I wanna be out on the block

I don't know how people feel about that

but I just wanna go home

you dig — I can't even use the phone

I'm tryin' to do the max

My mom is out there payin' the tax

but still I feel the love

even from the one above

My daddy is a dope fiend, but momma is a ryda

My daddy lives with his other baby's momma, but

my momma might find her

probably might fight her

It's okay because I'm gonna see him on the street

might slap him with my heat

and might sweep him off his feet.

-Medicine

From The Beat: While we understand your anger at your pops, the last few lines of threats against him trouble us (maybe your just fantasizing, in which case we understand, and you can ignore the next line). You do realize that if you do take your dad out, you'll likely remove yourself from the game as well, leaving you behind bars and your mom without her daughter once again, right? How can you make sure you're out there for your mama and yourself, using the phone when you want to, and celebrating the love and life the two of you have together?

If . . .

I regret all the things that I did wrong because I'd rather be on the streets than being in here locked up for some stupid stuff. If I hadn't robbed that person, I wouldn't be running from the rollers and getting caught. I would be at home right now, chillin' at my own house, eating my food.

-Kendrick

From The Beat: All true, Kendrick — but why did this power of perception only become clear after the fact? Did you realize the risks you were taking before you did the dirt? What will it take to hold this lesson in your mind so that next time you avoid putting yourself at risk of coming back?

What Lamei Regrets . . .

Taking my brother's car and not returning it to him.
Going on the run.

Getting' money in the town wit' fake ninjas.

Meeting my home girl and gang bangin' on the block.

Coming to jail and making wrong decisions

Oh how I wish I wouldn't have to regret all of this, and I

wonder if my life would be worse or better if this shhh

didn't happen to me! (Feel me?) Anyways, I'm out in a

few week weeks. Alright then, late.

-Lamei

From The Beat: That's a pretty specific list of regrets you come with. How will you make sure that you don't add to your list of regrets when you get back out? What will it take to live on the outs and stay on the outs?

No more making up It's just leave and don't come back.

Mind

When will he take the time to find

What's not in mind because you

Think I'm tryin' to be kind

But I'm not.

We yell, throw things

Make noise for neighbors to hear us

But why do we make up

Like nothing didn't ever happen.

Shhh, but now I see the light

No more making up

It's just leave and don't come back.

-Medicine

From The Beat: It sounds like you've found the time to find what's in mind, and whether he's figured it out or not, that you've figured it out should be enough. Now that you know this relationship isn't for you, how will you move on? What have you learned that you'll be able to apply to your next relationship?

Love, Trust, Respect, And Marriage

Love, trust, respect, and marriage

These words belong as one

Without one there is no other

Love, trust, respect, and marriage

Love is not easy to find, love can be anywhere

Love can be painful, happiness, and playfulness

And many more

When you find the right one

Make sure that they love you for who you are

And are true to you and that you can trust them.

-Nancy

From The Beat: This is good advice. Given that you see relationships so clearly, why do you think so many people end up involved in relationships where love, trust, and respect aren't present?

I Don't Like To Share!

My mother is single
Some say she's fine
I don't like to share her
'Cause she's all mine.

Since 1986
She has been fully mine
My father's, too
'Til 1995

My mother's very pretty
Most guys stop to stare
I hate it when they do this
'Cause I don't like to share
I ruin her relationships
So all she has is me
So she holds the heart
And I hold the key
My mom used to tell me
That sharing is kind
But I like it best
If she's mine, mine, mine.

-Baby D

From The Beat: We understand why you feel you the way you do, but we hope you realize that the tighter you keep your mother to you, the most distant she may end up becoming. Do you fear your mother leaving you for a man? Have you ever discussed your feelings directly with her, or do you let them out only indirectly by driving her men away? Maybe she can answer some of your fears if you give her the chance. Can you find joy in her joy with a man? If you fight to keep others away too strongly, we're afraid that she'll slip away from you.

They See

What my family sees when I come out of jail:
They see a criminal
They see a drug dealer
They see a gangster
They see a thief
They see a liar
But in reality I ain't changed
I'm still me

-Steven

From The Beat: Whoa! You said so many things using such few words. All the judgments people have about you don't matter because in the end you're still you. You're a genius for making that idea so clear with such little time to do so. Actually, there is one person whose judgment you must rely on, and that person is you.

**I hate it when
they do this
'Cause I don't like
to share
I ruin her
relationships**

I'm Tired

People hate me for the things I do
from running the streets and actin' a fool
Runnin' my mouth sayin' forget school
People runnin' they jaw, I'm tempted to
lose my cool

There are things I regret
like making that bet
Changin' my life for the worst
Sooner or later I'll be ridin' in a hearse
Six feet in the ground
No more selling dank by the pound

I'm tired of this life
I am tired of being told that I'm not right.
I'm a say forget this test
Please god put me to rest

I regret things I did every day
Except when I was rep'n the Bay
I love my team and I'm fit to clown
I'm too deep in this game
None of us going to get that fame
No matter what race, we all the same

So don't give me blame for the things I did
So I'm out for now
I'll hit you up later

-Youngsta

From The Beat: You know, Younsta, all of us will be six feet under sooner or later, but the design of life (God's plan?) is later, not sooner. Why speed up a process that is inevitable anyway? Are you sure when you say you're too deep in the game that you aren't just making excuses to keep doing what you know best? Can we be sure you aren't just afraid of the unknown (the "square" life)? We know of too many people who were way deeper into the game than you, who matured into different people than they were, who write books (or raps) about their earlier experience, and who now live legit lives with wives, children, jobs, a life. What we're saying is that you have choices in your life. You are not just a passive observer, letting things happen to you. If you're going to make the choices that lead to an early grave, or to your own slavery (imprisonment), then own up to those choices, and don't pretend that there's nothing you can do about it.

The First Time

I regret the first time I got caught up in some shhh. If I would have never taken that drank to school, I would have never been on probation.

Since that, I've been in and out of this place. I've been to Camp and almost had to touch down to CYA but I just got like ten months. But now I'm going to be 18 and I'm never coming back. I'm out on September 26!

-Rida

From The Beat: What's going to make this the last time? Is the threat of the adult system going to be enough to make you change your ways? Since you can't go back in time and change what happened, how can you use the knowledge you've gained to prevent yourself from falling down again?

It's All I Know

When I'm on them streets and I'm wit' my fam, all we're on is some sick stuff, because when it comes down to life or death, we're ready no matter what.
Man, what can I say? All I know is the block, my girl, and my family. If a ninja cross my line, his family ain't gone have nothin' to fall back on. I play fo' keeps, so if you choose to run up, I'm gone handle you. That's how it's goin' down
One love from Young Quis.

-Young Quis

From The Block: If the block is all you know, Young Quis, then it's time to expand your horizons, to experience other things, to increase the number of possibilities you might choose from for your own life. Don't settle for what's already been handed to you. That is the role of a follower, not a leader. You may be playing for keeps, but it's you that is being kept — in a cage, in chains, in negativity. Remember, it's not just the block that you know, you also know the enslavement of jail. Is that what you want?

Haters

Have you ever had people talk shhhh to you because of some rumor, and people don't have the story right? They just listening to the other guy that made the rumor. People just want to see Shrek to go down.

But you know what, Homie, I'm not going to go down because I'm not a sucker. I'm a soldier for life 'cause I been there and I seen the street. If you don't thank that I'm a soldier, that's on you because I'm a soldier.

You know what else is funny? People don't want Shrek to go back to South San Francisco, the place that I was born in. I don't care what people think about me. I don't care if you have a green light on me. You know what? I'm going to go back to South San Francisco because I was born there. Just don't listen to haters because they just want to bring you down.

-Shrek One

From The Beat: How will you deal with the haters once you get back home? If they are spreading rumors about you, how will you set the record straight? Are the lies they are telling about you the kind that will make your life hard, or get you into more trouble when you are free? We hope not, because this place is no place to be.

My Life

My life wasn't good when I was born because I saw a lot of stuff that I did not want to see. My dad went to the pen because of a 187. My big brother, Oger, is getting locked up in the pen. My mom is on food stamps, and the only thing in our refrigerator was two packs of beer. I needed to go to the streets to sell drugs and to make money for my family.

My best friend, Smiley, died on the streets of Fresno and I was there to pick up his body.

People told me that I was a screw-up, but I'm not because I've been there and I've seen stuff that a 25-year-old should not see in life. But I'm fifteen and during all my years, my life wasn't good.

That my life of Shrek. For all keep your heads up and much love.

-Shrek One

From The Beat: This is a messed up story, Shrek, and you're right, no child should have to see or experience all that you have seen and experienced. When you saw your best friend killed in Fresno, did it make you want to do anything different in your life? If he were able to give you advice now, what do you think he would be telling you?

My Choices

My choices are good — some are stupid and sad. Some are great. Some are bad and great.

Some of my good and great choices are to play hockey, to stay with my family and make everybody laugh.

One of my bad choices was to threaten to kill my brother. Now I'm in here until I go to my new Group Home.

-The Hockey Man

From The Beat: Why do you like to make people laugh, HM? How are you dealing with your anger problem — the rage that led you to threaten your brother? What are you going to do when he pushes your buttons again, and makes you mad?

School Fights

My family and friends will not look at me different because one of the main reasons why I be getting locked up is because of school. Also, the reason I got put on probation is because I got into a fight and everyone gets into a fight once in their lifetime. So no, I don't think people will look at me different.

-Alvin

From The Beat: Yes, it's true, everybody does get into fights once in their lifetimes. But did you only fight once in your lifetime, or do you have a longer history of fighting? Whether people look at you different or not, do you plan to make any changes in your life so that you act different? Like what?

**I don't think people
will look at
me different.**

Typical Day In The Town

Smashing in my Grand Prix blowing out propane
Twisting up that purple, livin' my life insane
Manufacturing that cocaine,
Tryin' to gain
fortune and fame
For them youngstas trapped in the game
doin' yo' thug thang
Icicles hanging from my fangs
Thizzles got me gritting like I had drank some tang
Lips crooked up, teeth chiseling down,
Passing through the town
Blowing on pounds
Leaving noises in the air like a bunch of hounds
Engine making growling sounds
Rims twenty inches round
going around and around
Block to block,
head out the window, wowing my people
Shaking they dreadlocks
Every time I stop
and let the beat knock
won't neva stop
Hold on while I invest in my stocks
by bapping this knock

-Suga Shane

From The Beat: We get a lot of pieces glorifying the fast life. And honestly we're sick and tired of it. We think y'all need some act right. It's cool to tell us stories about the streets. But all you're doing is ranting and raving and we are motivated by ideas that are deeper. If you could tell a story about the happiest day you spent on the block, what would you say? How 'bout the worst day? If you had a child, would you want him saying the same things you're saying? Why or why not?

Poverth

In my city
ain't nothin' pretty
To survive you got be brave
and kind of witty
We stuck in poverty so we try to prevail
But in the process we end up in jail
It ain't fair because in life it feels as if I've failed
So when I get out I might as well raise hell,
Already knowing I'm institutionalized for life
So I might as well stay out all night
And reject Jesus Christ.

-Suga Shane

From The Beat: This is a great piece of writing, though we have some differences with you. Do you think there's a way to prevail without doing things that can land you in jail? Aren't you just making excuses for a lifestyle you choose to live by claiming to be institutionalized for life? How old are you? How can you possibly know what you are or will be for life? Life is a lot longer than you've been around, so at least leave yourself open to the possibility that you don't know everything about it, yet. We feel like you have a lot of potential, so you can do things in life you're interested in without breaking the law. That's how you prevail! (And, by the way, you can reject Jesus Christ and still lead a good, moral, and decent life!)

Stay Up Kid

(Dedicated to Freddy P)

What's up wit' it kid?

I didn't think they would give you the Y but they did.
Keep ya' head up though pimp juice!
Even though you've been misused.
I'm gon' ride wit' cha fo' eva.
We gon' rep Gs togetha.
I ain't gon' forget cha.
Don't let them hatas get wit' cha!
Shake 'em off like what.
All right then kid, stay up.

-Self-Esteem

From The Beat: It seems like this 'kid' is really close to you. How do you think he'll do his time in the Y? Do you think he'll get into a lot of fights? Would you want him to? Why or why not?

Let Me Keep You Safe

What's up lil' mamma? Where you headed?
Oh! You think I'm a thug? Don't even sweat it.
I keep it thug but I can also be a gentleman.
Come on baby, let me be ya' gentleman
By the way baby, can I get cha name?
'Cause the way ya' walk is drivin' me insane.
I can keep ya' safe.
Let me keep ya' safe.

-Prince Charming

From The Beat: Have you ever used those lines on someone ('cause they sound like lines)? Did they work? We were tempted to use them, but we don't want to if they don't work. So, do they?

Air

I sit here wanting to die
Don't ask why
I don't know
But something tells me I have to go
Like a stubborn name you can't recall
You know it, but your mind won't pop
You try to ignore it, but it just won't stop
I can't take it anymore
I'm so rotten to the core
I don't want to be here
I want to be there
'Cause I'm taking in my last breath of air

-Smokey

From The Beat: We've been beating ourselves up wondering why someone so talented would want his or her life to end. We know that the world is a better place with you in it. That may sound corny, but sometimes things that are corny are the most true. This is one of those cases. What helps you get through times when you feel like ending it all? We really would be hurt if you were to leave us. Just know that we care about you and wish you the best — and we know we are not alone.

They Decide

They decider should we let the minors out for program
They decide when to let us use the bathroom or get water
They decide should we even take showers now or later
I'm tired of lettin' them decide stuff for me
How long is it going to take for us to realize
We got to start making decisions on our own
I'm not lettin' them decide for me no more

-Thinzel Washington

From The Beat: We admire the determination in this piece, TW, but we wish you had included a road map. How are you going to put yourself in a position to be making your own decisions? Or, put another way, how are you going to keep yourself out of the clutches of the law so that others aren't telling you what to do?

Bump, Bump, Bump

This yo' boy J-Cubs writin' live at the unit. 'Bout to give this to my boy Black Ant, feel? 'Cause they did us shady and gave us the boot out of Beat Within class. You know how these staff be.

Man, check this out. I was KP for two days. Then they fired me for talkin' during this weak drug program. Man, I was getting hooked up phat. Pluggin' da boys up and all. Feel me? Extra cookies. Feel me? Mmmm... cookies. Well I still gots to try to maintain but I'll holla later.

-J-Cubs Da Jeweler

From The Beat: It sounds like they gave you harsher consequences than your actions deserved. Does this happen often where you are? Explain a time when you thought someone was punished more than they should have been — or less.

Get It, Got It, Good!

I'm on the block trying to hustle
Pullin' a double 'cause I'm trying to bubble
This game is hard but I never thought
it was going to be easy
But believe me
I'll do anything to get my pockets cheesy
as the force trying to seize me
But I squeeze through the ninjas 'cause I'm so greasy
So when I bail from the boys
I keep a smile on my face
'cause I'm a young block monsta'
always getting away
And all them G's that I'm makin'
I ain't givin' it back
Made it on the block poppin' thizells
and selling that crack
So if you run up on me
I'm ready to attack
So when you see Black Ant
you bes' get back
'cause I stay in all black

-Black Ant

From The Beat: Well, we see you're a little confused. How can you be so greasy as a young block monster always getting away when you're writing to The Beat — from behind four walls? You can stop saying you're never going to get caught because you already did. And if you're so hard, why do you need to be dressed in all black in order to make somebody get back? We omitted your gun reference because we know where it leads, even if you still have to find out. How do you square this piece with the other piece you wrote? It seems like this is just the prescription you warned about — the one that keeps you in the "sistam"!

**This game
is hard
but I never
thought
it was
going to be
easy**

Prove 'Em Wrong

T uff
H ard
U npredictable
G entle

I think that since I've been locked up, people still see me as loud and very funny, but most of my family always thought I would be locked someday, and that I would never amount to nothing, but I'm going to prove everybody wrong 'cause I'm gonna make it. I regret giving someone a lighter and getting locked up. I regret getting high and drunk on New Year's Eve. I regret not being out on my birthday.

Thank you, Beat, for showing my work. Although my time was short, we will meet again on the outs. Stay up.

-Trus Gurl

From The Beat: You're welcome, and thank you for putting it down. How are you going to build on the strides you've taken during your time in the Hall? What does it mean to you to "make it"? How are you going to get there from where you're at now; what are the first few steps you have to take?

**I still gots to
try to maintain**

Life Behind Walls

Life behind walls is no joke. You miss everything in life. You have to make some changes in your life sometimes. You will begin to jump through hoops 'cause life ain't just about making loot. You have to keep yourself in school instead of hanging out with your friends fronting, trying to be cool.

If you want to change it's all about sacrifice, and that's what is cool.

-Courtney

From The Beat: For some people life is all about making loot. Is that what you used to be about? If so, what's more important to you now and why? What are some examples of sacrifices you've made to get back on a positive path?

Messed Up

This court system is messed up because I went seven months in Durango just to get locked up at Adobe, and now I might not even get out 'til I am 18, so I guess I just messed up my life, but I still wish that I can turn my life around, but it is just too late because I know I screwed up my life. And even though I messed up, God still loves me and he forgives me for my wrong.

-Joseph

From The Beat: Joseph, it is not too late. You are a young man learning about life. You are experiencing some difficult circumstances and feelings at this point in your life. It may seem like this season of life is going on forever and ever. Sometimes in lockup, time seems to stand still, but it is just an illusion. Just as you believe that God loves you and forgives you, is it also possible that He has a future for you that is worth living?

I'm Innocent

When they put me in this hellhole

They said I pulled the trigger

Then they put those words on me

Prison time but I'm only fifteen

Wait... wait a minute maybe even a second

I have something to say

I didn't pull it; I promise I'm innocent

Just wait... let me prove it, give me a chance

No don't slap them on

It wasn't me, why won't he confess

He said he loved me but he was frontin'

Please wait... No, don't lock me in

Wait a minute I'm innocent I want my freedom

-Sandra

From The Beat: Man, your homies are sometimes not really your homies, huh? They're not what you thought they were. Don't you think that if he really loved you, he would say that he really did it? He should risk his freedom so you can get back your freedom. That would be a true homie.

The Honest Truth

The only time I feel stripped, I could say, is when I am locked away behind closed doors in my cell day after day. It's a living hell. I feel like I'm losing my mind. There's nowhere to go.

In here you are forced to hide your tears and overcome your fears. I feel stripped twenty-three hours a day with barely enough room to breathe. Let alone move in this hostile environment. I try not to get violent in here; you're nothing but a number. They just throw you in your cell. They let you sit and dwell in your nine by four cell. I try to stay on my own. I feel stripped day after day in my cell.

-Diana

From The Beat: Do you think this is what you deserve? Is this what you need, and will this help you? This could be your turnaround. Think of better days because if you don't, then you're just going to feel stripped all day every day while being in there. And we know that you don't want to feel that way, right? It doesn't benefit you. What can you do instead?

Should The State Kill?

I think the state should not kill. I say you commit murder, you do your time, 'cause what does a person get out of that if the state kills someone — they learn nothing of their consequence.

So you do your crime, you do your time. And eventually, the murderer gets murdered in prison, so if you don't want to do no time, stay away from the crime.

-Elyssa

From The Beat: So what you're saying is that the state shouldn't execute convicted murderers because they'll get killed in prison anyway? Is that a better solution? What about those who are incarcerated for committing murder and haven't been — and aren't going to be — killed? A more basic way of putting the question: Is it right to punish those who have killed by (anyone) killing them?

My Prayer

Heavenly Father,

I pray you this prayer and ask you
To please forgive me for the things I've been
through

My world goes round and round when I

remind on my sins

So that's why I pray and ask for forgiveness

Believe me, Lord, I want to change

So please lead me away from this sinful place

I love you, Lord, and have faith in you

That one day you'll change my life and my

heart, too

God bless every person that you created

and make all their sins slowly get faded

-Candy

From The Beat: Beautiful prayer. Candy. It is important to take a hard look at our actions and their consequences, but don't let that be the end of your introspection. Take time to write out an action plan to work towards the changes you desire to make. Forgive yourself and lean on the hope and faith you have to face each day. Do what you need to do to move your life in a more positive direction.

Taken From Home

Hi, my name is Tiffany, and I'm fifteen years old. I feel like I'm stripped because of something I did and now I'm here (SEF). I feel like all my rights have been taken from me and my family, which hurts me the most.

I miss my family so much. Just about every night I cry myself to sleep, just to think I'm not going to be there with my little brothers growing up or my sister. And when I think about how I might not be there for my mom when she gets married. I feel like my heart is going to break and fall apart if it hasn't already.

Everything in my head feels like it's going millions of miles at a time and I just wanna break out and cry. So please just try to stay out of jail and live your life with your family and grow up with your brothers or sisters. And don't feel what I do. Thank you . . .

-Tiffany

From The Beat: We're sorry you're having such a hard time? Did you think of all this before this situation occurred? Before you do anything else or make any decisions in the near future, think about your family and your loved ones. Remember, what you do will affect others around you!

**They just throw
you in your cell.
They let you sit
and dwell in your
nine by four cell.**

Stripped Of Everything

Being in the Hall you are stripped of everything. Putting up with staff's stupid rules, and can't let yourself do anything about it or you'll get more time.

I sit in here feeling stripped of all my self-respect. I realize that I should have respected my body more, having sex with older guys, and hooking up with all their friends not caring to be respected. They always were selling or smoking glass. Every guy I would meet would always get me messed up so we could have some fun, day after day getting even more addicted. The amount they would give me for free was still not enough for my addiction, so I started having sex for drugs, stripped of all my pride.

I felt as if I was nothing with nothing left to give. Nobody could give me any advice because I never told anybody. I would act like an angel at home with my family. They never knew where I went when they would go to work or when I said I'm going to my friends. I feel it's not my fault, it's this crazy life we live full of sin. But God gave me the wisdom to know the difference.

-Sonja

From The Beat: You're right, this world is full of temptations and sin, but we have to disagree when you say none of this is your fault, that makes it too easy for you not to try to take control of yourself and your actions. How are you going to exercise the wisdom that God gave you? Do you have anyone helping you with your addiction? What's it going to take to be strong enough to the temptation to get high again? How can this time in the Hall be the starting point for a new dedication towards respecting yourself?

Euthanasia

I am going to start off writing about how I do believe it is "alright," "legal," whatever you want to call it, to put someone to death when they have an illness.

I think someone has the right especially under these circumstances. I believe euthanasia is a free right to have been allowed to come about for these unfortunate ones. Though in some sort it is somewhat of a fortunate thing because they do not have to suffer through another day when they don't want to the least bit.

They have to be one of the strongest human beings on this earth to be able to make the decision to end their life any time other than the day you're supposed to go — and it's amazing that these "doctors" are willing to give them that gift. I completely respect on both sides the decisions that are being made.

And I think anyone would be privileged to come help one of them and be able to have the blessing of knowing that they are one in a hundred to be able to end their life sooner. So that's my conclusion on what I have to say about the whole process of euthanasia.

-Michelle

From The Beat: That's an interesting take on a controversial subject. However, have you ever thought of the fact that in some cases the person dying doesn't even make the decision to go? On some occasions a loved one decides whether or not the doctor "pulls the plug." How would you feel if you were that loved one? Could you make that decision if it was your mother? Why or why not?

**I think anyone would
be privileged to come
help one of them**

I Wish

I wish that I had someone that I can trust, to talk to, but it's hard to trust anyone.

I wish for once that someone would lead me to the right path

but no one would do that for me.

Well, I guess what I am saying is some of you are lucky to have someone who loves and cares for you

-Joseph

From The Beat: Joseph, that someone you are looking for is out there. You just haven't met that person yet. When you do meet that person, listen to what they say and do. You are right, the people who have that someone lead them down the right path are very lucky. You are still young and some of us don't find that special person until we are older. But instead of waiting for that special someone to show up in your life, can you be that special person for somebody else and for yourself?

I'm Your Man

Ask yourself if I'm your man
Will I die for you or by your hand?
And if I go broke will you divide your lands?
Put me in your plans?
Hold me down with heat if my clip jams?
Stop and think, I got money in the bank
If you need gas to get there, pop your tank
I fear no one, a day I'm sleeping is a rare one
Prepared, never scared, blood, sweat and tears
I try ignore,
I close my eyes and I let the drama pour
On paper, when I was younger, my brother told
me how to score
Haters saying I was poor
that had me disobeying common law
That had me running in and out of Maricopa
County doors
Now I'm shining for you, what's mine is yours

-Matt
From The Beat: Hey Matt, your poem is close to home for many! You say that your brother told you how to score. Do you think that happens with a lot of people? Do you think that all teens have the "I don't fear anyone" attitude? When you write, "Now I'm shining for you, what's mine is yours," what do you mean? Are you shining as bright as can be — living up to your full potential, or do you have more room to grow? It would be a shame if a tall oak tree decided to stop growing after it sprouted just a few branches, don't you think? How much further can you grow?

Tricked

One day I was chillin' with some guys I thought were my friends. Everybody was bored and broke except me, so somehow they tricked me into buying drugs and alcohol.

So everybody, including me, were smoking and drinking. I ended up getting so high and drunk that it seemed like every 10 minutes I'd be in a fight.

So this goes to tell you, don't get tricked into buying stuff that ends up getting you into trouble. And that was my bad trip.

-Tim

From The Beat: Looks like you're learning that if you overdo drugs and alcohol, you are bound to get into trouble. You say you were tricked into buying drugs and alcohol. Why do you think you weren't able to say, "No" to your friends? This piece does a good job of showing how peer pressure can play a part in getting folks into trouble. Nevertheless, you need to own up to your share of the blame, too.

don't get tricked

As I Sit In Durango

As my days go by I sit here and think and I seem to keep asking myself, "Laura, where did you go wrong?"
I can't find a reason, so I blame it on my mom.
I say to my mom, "It's all your fault."
Why did you stop caring for me?
Why did you stop loving me?
She tells me she hasn't and she never will, but it's her responsibility to see that I'm safe.
So now my mind is clear and I am able to think.
I should have trusted her instruction a long time ago and maybe if I did I wouldn't be here today.
So now I'm in Durango, unable to get out.
I really want to be with my mom and let her know that I am thankful for what she did and I love her even more and I'll never let her go.

-Laura

From The Beat: Laura, deep down you may already know what decisions brought you to this place in life. Maybe you are having a hard time admitting it to yourself because of the shame. Don't let shame tell you you're bad, but let it tell you that some of what you did was wrong. Admitting that you have made bad decisions does not make you bad; it makes you honest. Keep working on understanding yourself and your mom so you can each experience more happiness.

The Way I Feel About You

I feel that our love is true.
Because I feel so good when I'm with you.
Every day and every night I think, where would I be without you?
It is crappy that I feel this way because at first you were just a friend?
Now I wish our love will never end.
Once again I will give love another try.
If you hurt me, my heart will probably die.

-Andres

From The Beat: Hey Andres, do you think that if you weren't locked up, you might have your true love now? Whatever happens, our heart never dies from heartbreak even though it may feel like it. Good luck building this friendship and love.

When I Got Locked Up

When I got locked up, I felt sad and my mom told me that she was going to get me out of here because the judge decided to detain me until my next court hearing.

And then I felt so sad because my family misses me and my brother and sister. And my mom and dad miss me and I miss them, too.

-Ramiro

From The Beat: We agree with you that everyone is sad when they get locked up. Why do you think your family is sad that you're in detention? Do you think that your brothers and sisters learn from your mistakes or follow in your footsteps? If you don't want to see your family sad anymore, what changes will you need to make?

San Luis Obispo

The Day I Felt The Pain

The day I really felt pain was when my mom woke me up and gave me the bad news that my dad cut his veins on accident at his work with an ax. He overbled and lost his ability to move his fingers and walk normal. That shhh hurt me, and it still hurts me now. The thing that hurts me the most is that my jefe can't live a normal life.

-D

From The Beat: Your dad's injury is a daily reminder of how valuable the body is. Does it make you think twice about how you treat your body? Do you try to make the most of your life because you realize you might not always have the same quality of life, like your dad?

Sympathy For My Mom

I had sympathy for mom because she was doing drugs, because she was losing her hair. Yes, I had pity for my mom because she looked like shhh.

-Mike

From The Beat: We hope she's able to get clean for her sake, and also so you and her can have a better relationship. What do you do to support her? What do you do to keep yourself strong while watching your mom lose her hair and keep using drugs? Talk to a teacher, counselor, family member,

People See What They Want To See

People probably look bad at you knowing that you've been locked up, especially if you're real young. Most people who look down on kids who have been locked up are mostly older people who don't know what it's like to go through it.

Most of my friends are older, so they go to County. But most of them know what it's like to be locked up at a young age. They still treat me the same because they know my real self, not just the side of me that gets me into trouble. It don't change the way I get treated because they always have something to say, whether it's the same stuff or different.

-Not just bad

From The Beat: Do people other than your friends know the real you? Why or why not? What is the real you? If you could tell the people who want to judge you what you're all about — the good and the bad — what would you say? How would you describe yourself?

They still treat me the same because they know my real self, not just the side of me that gets me into trouble.

What Makes Me Happy

What makes me happy is my family, chillin' with them on a daily basis, and never the same people. I always hang out with different family members, but mainly my cousin, Antonio, and also my cousin, Isabel. Only because we always chill back and have a few malt beverages. Have some laughs and some bad times, too, but mainly good ones.

It's overall really fun and I look forward to doing it a lot when I get out of JSC, 'cause this is a really big hellhole to me and I hate being here.

-Angel

From The Beat: Sounds like a good time, but some of your family activities can get you locked up again in this place you call a "hellhole." Can you consider chillin' with yo' family without the beverages in the future? Ofr is it worth it to you to get locked up for those memories?

One Bad, One Good

My decision, I got two — one bad and one good. My bad one is getting stolen property and violating probation and home detention.

My good one is thinking over something like getting in trouble, like doing something and then I don't. I walk away.

-Brian

From The Beat: Was it hard to make the good decision? If you hadn't gotten caught for the bad decision, would you still think it was a bad decision?

What Do They See?

My family feels bad, because it makes them look bad to people, and also people will treat them differently from our people.

When I first robbed someone, I knew it was trouble. I regret doing the bad crimes and also before you do something, think.

-Young Factor

From The Beat: Can you clean up the family name? Is that possible? Do you think robbing is not only trouble for you, but that it's wrong to take what isn't yours?

My Decision

My decision I made about being with this boyfriend was tough, because he's not the right age for me. My father hates him. My PO also hates him. He takes care of me, he spends time with me, and I know he loves me, because I messed up so many times and he still hasn't let go, for real, for real, yet...

He has tried to let go of me just recently, because he wanted me to do good, but I proved, convinced him that without him, nothing can do good for me...He didn't seem to care about what I said about doing bad, he just assumed that I would do perfectly fine without him, for a few hours, until I was about to get out the car and bounce with my homeboy...

What hurts was I thought it really was goin' to be over, until he started to cry and he didn't want me to leave...So he came along to my homeboy's house and made up after we left...

No matter who tries to separate us, he's always goin' to be in my heart! Te amo, Nix.

-Lil' Mami

From The Beat: Do you know in your heart that things can go well for you with or without anyone else, including Nix? Your future, your success, depends only upon you. Nix seems like he's a good influence on you. It's going to be on you to decide who your friends and boyfriends will be. You're learning to trust your own judgment, and that's part of growing up. Even if Nix and you split up, you can still hold him in your heart!

My Stupid Mistake

I wanna let you know that I'm sorry, but everyone makes mistakes and I'm one of these hynas who made one big mistake and I regret it.

I hope this special someone will forgive me! I'm sorry.

-Muneca

From The Beat: Everybody makes mistakes, Muneca. Have you apologized to the person you hurt? How can you make things better with this person?

The Inch Within

Keep coming back
You'll go to prison if you work it
Stay true and remain savage
Ball above all

Kill for your freedom
Stupid ass kid

Kill somebody, so you can go to prison
forever

It works if you work it
Keep coming back

-Forgot To Sign

From The Beat: Is this a form of irony?

My Family Feels Bad That I'm An Inmate In Juvy

My family feels bad that I'm an inmate in Juvenile Hall. They do not like the fact that I'm locked up, when I should be at home. I feel the same way about it. I should be at home, doin' something constructive.

-Jacarce

From The Beat: In what ways does your being in Juvy affect your family? Are they sad, scared for you? Angry at you? What constructive things could you, should you be doing on the outs?

Animals

Animals in Marin

We goin' raw

'Cause we animals raw

-Young Factor

From The Beat: Young Factor, what does this poem mean?

My Jefita

I think my jefita misses me when I'm in these four white walls, but when I'm in the outs, she worries. But look at me, how I'm going to be doing some time, losing my mind. Oh, well, someday I'll be out again, back in the game.

-Lo

From The Beat: Why does your jefita worry about you when you're on the outs? Because she knows, like you write, that as soon as you're out, you'll be back in the game again? Hasn't being in Juvy taught you that the game is playing you? Don't you have any plans for a future that doesn't include being in the game? No wonder your mother worries about you. Do you think she's somehow relieved when you're inside? Or does she worry about you inside, too?

I Regret My Life

I regret my life. When I was thirteen, that's when I got put in the system for doing a stupid crime. I'm not going to talk about it, but it was stupid and ever since then I been in and out of the Halls, but every time I go in and come out, I learn something new, but I always seem to fall into trouble somehow.

-Smurf

From The Beat: You know right from wrong, Smurf, and you know what's legal and what's illegal, so you know what's going to get you busted, right? Is the problem that you do illegal stuff but think you won't get caught? Even if you don't get caught, you know that almost everything that's illegal is also wrong, so why don't you make up your mind to stop doing all the stupid stuff, as you call it, and stop getting busted?

"Harry Potter and The Prisoner of Azkaban"

My favorite movie is "Harry Potter and The Prisoner of Azkaban." I think it was a good making and a good story, and I think it will be a good attraction to the USA.

-Jason

From The Beat: What was special about the story of "Harry Potter and The Prisoner of Azkaban"? Do you think other people will enjoy it? Can you tell us a little about the story, so we can get a hint of whether we'd like it or not? Is it better than "Harry Potter And The Sorcerers Stone"?

Never Regret!

I will never regret meeting Nix
I will never regret using crystal
I will never regret loving my man
I will never regret saying yes
When he asked me out
I regret running away
I regret getting myself on probation
I regret not listening

-Lil' Mami

From The Beat: We can't tell you how to live your life, but we can warn you about what crystal can do to your mind. Have you ever seen a meth head? They can be all shaky, their skin drawn in, their mind screwed up. Ain't nothin' nice. Do you think you can stay away from crystal when you get out? If you need help staying away from the drug, can you set your self up with a program now, while you're in Juvy? We hope so 'cause it'll take you nowhere.

Hard Time In The Halls

I can't stand the system. Takin' my points for no reason. I don't know how much more I can take. They be playing ninjas from Marin and that's where I'm from, so they think they could run over me.

-Young Braun

From The Beat: What makes you think system discriminates against folks from Marin City? Can you give any examples? Can you talk to the counselors or someone you trust about your allegations of discrimination?

Fishing

The things I love and miss are going fishing with my step dad and my brothers at night. We would fish all night no matter the fright. We would come back in the morning with four buckets of fish. We would all be tired. We would go to sleep, dreaming about our day. I love it, so I wish my step dad was still alive, because I miss him.

So I love to fish. We would fish a wish, and then put it on a dish, and I would keep wishing the wish and go and fish.

-Jason

From The Beat: You always write about your step dad, who loved your mom, brothers and you. It's a shame he died. He seems to have taught you and your brothers many wonderful things about life. We hope someday soon your family can be together again.

Bad Decision

I made a bad decision. When I was thirteen years old, I got arrested with my first armed robbery charge. I was with a few friends and I had one of my knives with me. There were a couple of kids acting tough, so I decided to mess around with them. I pulled out the knife and held it out at them. I started yelling at them and saying stuff like, "Give me your bag." The kid with the bag didn't listen to me, so I walked in and cut his bag open.

I pulled out some stuff and threw it to my friend. I wandered around the kid with the knife. I cut the bag again and threw more stuff to my friend. We left and I yelled at them some more. They started freaking out, and we ran away.

We heard cops, so I ditched the knife in the river. The cops caught me when I was on a bike path, trying to get to another town. That was my first armed robbery charge.

-Jack

From The Beat: Have you had more robbery charges since your first one, Jack? Have you learned to stop robbing people? Have you stopped carrying knives or any other weapons? Do you really think you have the right to hurt anyone, with or without a weapon? What's or who's going to stop you from making more, similar bad decisions?

I Fear Myself

I fear myself
Waiting until I die
And see if a tear falls itself
Calls my awaking ears
No more "I love you"
Now it's gone
Say, "Bye"
And now I'm here
Gonna die

-Tears

From The Beat: You sound like you really need some help. You and your child need some peace. Who do you have in your life who can help you? Talk to your counselors. Can you just trust life enough to know that you have the strength to figure out what to do, for yourself and your child, when you get out of Juvy? What are your choices when you get out? What kind of help do you need the most? Who is taking care of your child while you're in Juvy?

Otra Vez Aquí

Hola, como estan todos ustedes. Espero que todo bien. A los odiosos, espero que dejen de ser odiosos. Yo como todos ustedes saben, estuve en el Rancho por unas semanas. Me pelié algunas veces con mis rivales y creo que me van a dar tiempo muerto y me trajeron a la juvenile por un time out, pero mañana me van a recoger de nuevo.

Yo todavía estoy down por mi barrio y todo. Yo no sé cuando voy a salir. Hoy que estoy en la B4, y me doy cuenta que aquí hay unos vatos odiosos. Cuando estoy con ellos actúan con miedo y me hablan bien. Peor hablan cosas por mi espalda. Esto, nomas enseña la clase personas que existen en el mundo. Cuidensen y espero que salgan.

From The Beat: Sabemos que la gente se porta de tal manera aveces. Pero sinceramente tienes que enfocarte en hacer tu programa, no en buscar pleito, o en ver quien habla bien de ti o quien habla mal. Enfocate en terminar tu programa, que es lo que te va a dar lo mejor para ti, lo que te dara tu libertad.

Here Once Again

Hello, how are all of you doing? I hope that everyone is doing well. To all the haters, I hope y'all stop being haters. I, as all of you may know, was in the Ranch for a few weeks. I fought a few times with my rivals and I think they are going to give me dead time, so they brought me to Juvenile for a "time-out," but tomorrow they are going to pick me up again.

I am still down for my 'hood and whatever. I don't know when I am going to get out. Today, I am in B4, and I'm starting to notice that in here there are some haters. When I am with them, they act scared and try to start a conversation with me, but they talk things about me behind my back. This just goes to show you the type of people that exist in this world. Take care of yourselves and I hope that y'all get out.

-Popeye B4, SF/YGC

Take care of yourselves and I hope that y'all get out.

Mi Raza

Somos Mexicanos donde quiera que andamos
Chicanos, unidos raza siempre le quiquiamos.
Controlamos todo el mapa.

Ninguno se escapa
Trucha, luz verde
Camina por la linea

Uno para mi barrio y ocho pal Chicano.

Cuetes, dinero, ramflas y filero

Es lo que se necesita para que te hagan daño.

No pongas tu vida en el cañón,

Trucha con lo que desees, no seas un rajón,

Mexicano cien por ciento hasta la sepultura

Y si no me creen pues brincale

Si tienes duda

Chicanos que se creen Americanos

No digan que son Mexicanos

Porque queman a la raza.

Vivo la vida descontrolada feliz

From The Beat: Te salió de apelos la cansión, pero se nota que pusistes mucha representación en esta dedicatoria. Sabias que para ser un gran talentoso y obtener respeto no necesitabas de hablar mucho, o decir muchas cosas para que la gente te admire.

My People

We are Mexicans wherever we go
Or Chicanos, united folks, we always kick it
We control the whole map

No one escapes
Watch your back, green light
Walk down the line

One for my 'hood and eight for the Chicano

Guns, money, rides and knives

That's what is needed so they can hurt you

Don't put your life in the canyon

Be careful with what you desire, don't be a flaker

100% Mexican until I die

And if you don't believe me, bring it on

If you have any doubts

Chicanos that think they are Americans

Don't even call yourselves "Mexican"

Because you'll put the people down

I happily live my messed up life

-Chicano, Marin

Me Siento Mal Por No Despedirme

Me siento mal porque no le dije a mi familia que me venía a este país. No me despedí de ellos cuando me vine a la US. Creo que me van a deportar y no se que pensarán de mí. Estoy arrepentido de todo esto, pero ahora quiero pedirle perdón porque me siento mal por haberme ido sin permiso.

From The Beat: No te preocupes que la familia y más los padres son los que más perdonan, son los que más quieren y más cuando se dan cuenta que el pecador se arrepiente de lo que ha hecho. Esperamos que ahora que te distes cuenta del valor que es la familia es muy importante y que debes de tomar decisiones con ellos.

I Feel Bad For Not Saying Good Bye

I feel bad because I did not let my family know that I was coming to this country. I didn't say goodbye the time before I left to come to the US. I feel like they are going to deport me and I don't know what they'll think about me then.

I regret all this that has happened, but now I want to say that I am sorry to them because I feel bad for having left without their permission.

-José, Marin

Me Arrepiento Por Cambiar Mi Vida

Me Arrepiento de haber cambiado mi vida. Yo he venido varias veces a la cárcel. Ahora ellos quieren mandarme a un placement y por eso estoy peliando el caso. Ahora mi familia ya no me mira como antes. Espero cambiar mi vida. Soy el mejo y al Diabolo con el resto.

From The Beat: Deseamos la mejor de las suerte que haya en esta vida. Tienes que hacer algo para ganarte esa confianza que te tenían tus padres. Acuerdate que tú la perdistes y la tienes que ganartela tú de la misma manera como la perdistes. ¿En qué eres mejor?

I Regret Changing My Life

I regret having changed my life. I have come several times to jail. Now they want to send me to a placement and because of that, I am fighting the case. Now my family doesn't look at me like they used to. I hope to change my life around. I am the best and to hell with the rest.

-Conejo, Marin

Te Extraño Muchísimo

¿Hola mi amor, como estas? Antes que nada te mando un abrazo. Mija, quiero que sepas que te extraño muchísimo y no sabes cuanto me haces falta. No hay un día que no piense en ti. Nunca te he olvidado.

Apesar de todo lo que hemos pasado, nunca te olvidare y siempre estarás presente en mi mente. OK mi amor no soy un gansito Marinela, pero recuerdame.

Te amo, mi shinegirl. Tu vato, lil' Droopy.

From The Beat: Se nota que no te vas a dar por vencido con esta chiva, que no? Si en verdad quieres a esta chava deberías de hacer lo posible por hacer lo mejor de ti.

I Miss You A Lot

Hello my love, how are you doing? Before we begin, I send you a hug. Girl, I want you to know that I miss you a lot and you don't even know how much I miss you. There's not a day that I don't think about you. I have never forgotten about you.

Regardless of what we have been through, I will never forget about you and you will always be present in my mind. OK my love, I'm not a little bunny, but remember me.

I love you my shine girl. Your thug, Lil' Droopy.

-Lil' Droopy B4, SF/YGC

I regret having changed my life.

Me Arrepiento De Lo Que Hice En El Rancho

Nomas quiero decir que me arrepiento de lo que hice en el Rancho. Me arrepiento de haberme metido en problemas y ahora me van a dar más tiempo. Esta vez siento que si voy a terminar mi tiempo. Quiero decirles a los homies que estan el Beat que se cuiden.

From The Beat: Bueno, esta bien que te arrepientas por lo que hicistes. Ahora es tiempo que tomes las cosas más a serias, que termines lo que tienes que hacer para poder salir de todas las cosas que te han mandado hacer. Desde ahora en adelante, haz las cosas bien.

I Regret What I Did At The Ranch

The only thing that I have to say is that I regret what I did in the Ranch. I regret getting myself into problems, and now they are going to give me more time. However, this time I feel like I am really going to finish my time. I want to say to all the homies that write for The Beat, take care of yourselves.

-Malo B1, SF/YGC

HOWARD D. SHEPHERD, JR.

Make no mistake about this, this first time writer, Howard D. Shepherd Jr. who is confined in Pickaway Correctional Institution in Orient, Ohio shares the pain that has given him a life sentence of incarceration. We do not know too much about this writer, but what is layed out for all to read and that's what he wants to share. So, with that said, we thank you Howard for taking the time to share a part of you.

I Feel Your Pain

I read your magazine and could feel a lot of those writers. I know their pain.

I have used drugs and I could always stop. One thing that I could not stop was the LADY. Though I had more than my share, and thought of myself as a "ladies" man, and I treated them like women, not things to beat or sell. They all felt nice, and the smell was always unique, and I thought I loved them all. And I suppose I did.

Well, there came a lady who was young and liked to party. I liked her, but our union was the fault of my then LADY Denise. Denise was jealous and had no reason, but she caused to need this young lady. Therefore, we became a part-time couple.

The young thing was not what I was used to. She was unclean, not with herself, but with her living area. Therefore, I could not make it a LIFE.

We came together and sometimes stayed together and I cared very much for her, but the lady in my mind was Denise, but Denise was a monster. She would NOT let me be happy or content with her. Her past had been rough and she could not get over it. She needed bondage and I could not do that, so there were times that she would run me away. I went to this young thing, or to others.

I had did time for killing a man, so I did not like sleeping alone, nor did I ever, so when she ran me away, I ran to others.

I never had a woman that I could not have again. I was not mean to them, nor did I quit them with burned bridges. I tried to simply move on when it was over.

When this young thing turned up pregnant and she still wanted me, she told everyone the child was mine. I LOVED and still love the child. She had no part in my prison death. Se tried to cause them to stop. They simply said she was incompetent and slammed me anyway.

This state is not a family-minded state. It is a PRISON STATE. The only industry here is PRISONS, so they use any excuse to put you away and they keep you there.

Well, I just thought I would let some others know that there are plenty of us feeling their pain.

If you know of anyone being imprisoned to death for a simple lie, please tell them I feel their pain. I will die in here and my crime was a phone call threatening to take this child from the mother and grandmother. I love her always, (Heather Danielle Shepherd Nara).

Her loving father, Howard D. Shepherd, Jr.

**If you know of anyone
being imprisoned to
death for a simple lie,
please tell them I feel
their pain.**

I will die in here

Untitled

(Written the first week at Man. C. I. of the last time I was with the mother and child at the Vegas Bar.)

There was a pumpkin' I once knew

It seems so long ago

Her mother said, "I hurt her bad"

We know it isn't, so

As I lay here in my cell

My memories wander far

Back to the times we had

Down at the Vegas bar.

Lady

A lady is not a drug, nor is she a pet.

If you call anything else a lady
you have not had a lady yet.

A lady will make you happy or make you cry.

She can be a friend, she can be a foe.

She can make you stay, she can make you go.

She can make you live, she can make you die

She can make you rich, she can make you poor

She make you happy or she can make you sad

She can be the best or worse thing that you've ever had

The happiness she gave is really very sad

She can bring on a frown or she can make you smile

She can make a simple step seem like a mile

She can keep you warm or she can be so cold

She makes you young, she makes you feel old

If you meet your lady, make no mistake,

she's not a thing to drink or a thing to take.

You will know when YOUR lady you meet,

you will feel it from the top of your head

to the bottoms of your feet.

I hope for your sake YOUR lady is not the one I HAD.

She made me happy, then she made me cry,

she sent me to prison,

not to live, she sent me to prison TO DIE.

Only this lady could do such a thing,

this lady did this when I offered another lady A RING.

SHE IS THE MOTHER OF MY CHILD

AND SHE IS MY EXECUTIONER.

AND NO LEGAL SYSTEM CAN SAVE ME, IT IS ONLY SHE.

MY LADY... LISA.

**My memories
wander far
Back to the
times we had**

KIDSTER

Oh, oh, look who's back.. It's been some time since we heard from our old friend Kid. Many years ago, he was a scrawny youngster in SF/YGC's B2 unit, sharing his talents as an artist and writer, contributing stories and ideas to The Beat Within when we were still in our infancy. From B2 Kid worked his way up the latter in SF/YGC, B3 B4, and B5. And in between stints in the Hall and placements, Kid would come on down to our office to work, to say hello, etc. Upon hitting 18, Kid has continued to live a life on the edge, from county jail to the pen, to parole, to where he is today back in the county jail fighting a serious case. The sad part about this is, he now has a beautiful baby girl who needs her daddy to take care of her and himself, free of gangs, drugs and a life of incarceration. Just the other day we received the following update....

I Ain't No Tony Montana, But Like His Words...

Believers! You can believe me or not, I have no reason to lie. That's the difference between me and a lot of people because I plead guilty to a soft felony of assault with great bodily injury, so I could get out two months early. I am not to be believed. People point their finger at me and say I'm the bad guy! What does that make them? Good? Nah, that doesn't make them any better than me. They just know how to hide and lie. Living in fear of the truth, scared.

Me, I don't have to lie; I always tell the truth. Even when I'm lying, it ends up being the truth!

Last month while being incarcerated as a violator of parole, the San Francisco D-A picked up some heavy charges! I was brought from Solano State Prison back to 850 (County Jail). My parole violation is now up! I'm still incarcerated fighting my case.

While fighting this case, I ended up being charged with assault on a peace officer. (Now this ain't a lie where it ends up being the truth, this is the actual truth)....

I was in the gym, playing basketball with my homie Oscar. Towards the end of the gym period, I go for one last lay up and my prescription glasses fall off, land on the floor, and a screw and lens pop out.

"Shhh!" Now I got to look for the screw, but I can't see without my glasses on.

The police states to me, "Let's go!"

I say, "Hold on, man. I'm looking for my screw so I can see."

He says, "No, we gotta go."

I told him, "Man, if it was your stuff, you'd want to look for it!"

The reply I got amazed me. He said, "Who the hell do you think I am? Some lil' street punk? I'll kick your god damn ass!"

So I said, "Man, whatever," and left the gym.

I'm walking down the stairs and when I got downstairs, I hear over his partner's radio, "Detain the guy with the glasses."

So I'm waitin' around the corner from the deputy in front of a tank where my homeboys are. So I start sayin' "What's up" to them, and out of nowhere, the deputy comes and punches me in the mouth.

I put my palms up to protect myself from getting' injured.

Then, I feel another deputy start punching me. They get on top of me. Then, pull me into a corridor where there are no observers and continue to beat me until the other deputies showed up.

My homeboy Oscar, who I was playin' basketball with, observed this and walked towards the deputy 'cause he knew it wasn't right. I heard him yell, "Hey, what are you guys doin' to my homie?" And then, more "professional" officers asked him to get on the floor and

handcuffed him.

Charges were filed against me.

I had pictures taken of my hands that show no marks indicating I punched any officer. I had a busted lip and red marks on my back. I went to the medic and showed them I had a busted lip, but in the medical person's report, it says, "inmate has no visible injuries."

"What! I showed you my lip!"

Is this a case of police officers covering each others asses? I think so. This officer has a history of brutalizing inmates. 3-4 months prior to this incident, this deputy broke another inmate's back. That inmate now has a pending lawsuit against him.

Charges were pressed against me to try and take the blame off of the deputy.

I read the newspaper everyday. Today, a State narcotics agent was indicted on either manslaughter or second-degree murder for shooting/killing an unarmed man running away from him. Ex-officer Fagan has the "Fajita-gate" case, but because his father was a high-ranking official in the SFPD, they tried to cover it up, but it almost backfired, and the case is still ongoing. What about the cops in Oakland? There's an ongoing case of police brutalizing civilians. Remember in LA, the rogue cops down there? Ones that actually got convicted? I think it was part of the Rampart or Crash Unit, (I don't have all the necessary access to research this accurately).

More and more often, the public is seeing this police brutality going on and reporting it.

I thought the police were there to serve and protect, not abuse or harass!

It's unfair because I'm an ex-felon/inmate in a County Jail that the deputies that work here can abuse me and get away with it.

Why just the other day I read in the newspaper about two SF Sheriff's Deputies had a problem at SF General Hospital, in which one deputy ended up getting fired, or forced to resign because of threats made to the other officer.

Then, where's the morals of the female deputy who starred in a pornographic film titled "Bus-stop whores," who ended up resigning over it! This world is crazy. Officers always seem to be there when you don't need 'em, but when you need one, you can be sure if you have a criminal history that they will be nowhere to be found!

Oh yeah, I forgot to put in the story, "Do you think the two deputies who weigh about 230 pounds, all solid muscle feel more like men because they got to jump a 20-year-old kid who weighs 135 pounds at 5' 8"? Hmmm, sounds like some pretty tough men to me!



CESAR HERNANDEZ

Cesar Hernandez sends us two powerful, tragic poems. Cesar is clearly a man who feels, and that is what makes him a gifted poet. We hope that someday life and the choices he makes within the life that presents itself, will help Cesar realize his dreams and not his nightmares.

Once More

Once more, it is time to sit and wait,
For something I know is not in my fate,
I stand at the door to wait once more,
For something I know comes no more,
A letter . . . containing words of love inside,
Your thoughts, emotions, with nothing to hide.
It started off good, we thought it would last,
But these things are best forgotten
(left in the past)

But that's over, still, I want to know why
I admit that it hurts, but I refuse to cry.
So, I'll continue to write,
not screeching for the same,
Just hope you'll take the time and try to explain.
What I have done . . . did I act like a fool?
Did I do or say something that maybe hurt you?
This whole ordeal feels like hell . . .

Wait!

I must go, for here comes the mail,
I got once more and stand at my door.

Brown By Nature

Brown by nature . . . proud by choice . . .

My ways, my life, my pride,
instilled in me from my ancestors' tribe.

They were brown, as brown as the eagle's wings,
who soars through the sky,
who landed as a symbol to my ancestors
of where to live, breed, and die.

True warrior at heart, struggle, sacrificing, learning to survive
until the day they were deceived by their own eyes.

They arrived with their ways,
their culture, their rites... the Spanish
When it was all said and done,
many were left in bittersweet anguish.

They thought they could burn it, destroy it,
bury it for no one to find,
but it wasn't material, it was instilled in mind and heart.

It came to an end; they felt they had won,
little did they know, it had all just begun

Many left poor,

but no matter how many years go by,
the time will come to settle the score.

Brown by nature . . . proud by choice . . .

Wish I could have been there to fight, battle, rejoice,
Though through life's plan I couldn't be,

Call it destiny if that's what you see,
But in one thing I can always find joy,
the gift of my ancestors:

Brown by nature, proud by choice.

DAT NGUYEN

Our dear friend Dat Nguyen is what we Beat facilitators would consider to be one of the most loyal contributors we have. At least once a month he delivers a priceless piece of art (on the next page) as well as a written piece, and that is what we have this week a powerful piece of art that goes with the poem, "One Life To Live." The two pieces that follow truly give the reader a taste of where Dat is today, with his life in a cell and how his life has unfolded from the streets to juvenile to the CDC (California Department of Corrections). We met Dat in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall max unit over four years ago, when he just turned 16 years old. Tragically, he called juvenile max unit home for the next two years, where he excelled as a leader on the unit (with peers and staff) and discovered his talents as a writer and artist in The Beat Within. Upon turning 18 he left juvenile hall for prison to begin his seventeen-year bid. Today the well disciplined Dat Nguyen writes us from lockdown on a level four yard in High Desert State Prison in Susanville, CA.

Another Day Begins, Excerpt From a Letter

My days in here are usually the same
Wake up at 530am pray,
Make my bed then stretch.
I work out with a few warm ups, until tray comes at
6am
I eat breakfast and dehydrate myself.
Brush my teeth and take care of my hygiene
business
By 640am I start my workout, until 920am
Then clean my cell
Then birdbath
By 1030am I chill and watch TV
until 1130am, I set up for lunch
Finish by 1210pm, brush my teeth
And then start practicing my drawing skills.
I draw until 4pm
Get my dinner tray and put the food that I'll eat
away
Go back to drawing
I'll eat dinner at 6pm
Go back to drawing
By 8pm I'll have most of my stuff put away and
watch TV
(Most of the time I draw,
but a lot of it I spend looking at books or catching
TV shows)
By 8-10pm I watch TV
Then by 10 I go to sleep.
Then another day begins

**no more y-a
'cause c-d-c laid
the way
build more
prisons tax
money will pay**

Thank You All Of You

To all the dedicated people that go through each day striving to help make a difference within, and all over our surrounding world. Without you, a lot of us would be lost somewhere, not knowing what to do!

I write on this July 20th day, to proudly appreciate and honor your hard-work. As I can see by reading, I know what you all are going through, from personal and past situations.

I can honestly say that The Beat Within keeps

One Life To Live

step on the streets I quickly dodged the bright light
stay in the dark incase they let one spark
i learned the hard way that ain't nothing free
g-t-a to burglary take me on a crime spree
my voice deepened as puberty crept
no more toe to toe i played the game of death
pledged allegiance to each other stay down for life
through thick and thin dodging lead and knife
i play i pay swore won't turn snitch
if get caught take the deal and stay committed
my heart roamed the streets while in the hall I slept
shackled up in court while my mom wept
stay updated on the street in case they let me free
until my co-d hop on a three month's plead
rolled his stuff walked out of max unit with no "good-byes"
didn't have to wait 'til my preliminary to know he testified
divided up 'cause the homies took side
denied the truth he gave the homies lies
got my heart tied up between the deal and truth
but if I go to trial I knew I'd loose
no more coffee shop kick back on the late night tip
'cause prop 21 got me on some bullshhh
no more y-a 'cause c-d-c laid the way
build more prisons tax money will pay
gray goose destined to a 1-80 yard
stay with tattooed up o-gs with them life time scars
dodging these snakes and avoid the fakes
weak cats exposed to violence shook up like the '89 quake
lock up lockdown that's how the guards get down
get use to cell feed in 1-80 we don't walk to chow
our program slam due to riot and stabbing
but we stuck in the cell when metal come up missing
sitting at my desk with a pen in hand
my life lessons I pick up in the pen
not all greet you with a smile are friend
homies lost their trial down in the county jail
lost hope, stressed out in their jail cell
heaven as hell that's where my homie will dwell
my mind is not free 'cause I'm a captured bird
accepting my reality I'm living among prison nerds
but my dreams stay clear and my hope stays strong
break these chains and prove the system wrong

ERNESTO J. GUEYGER

These are the letters and praise we are talking about! Thank you Ernesto J. Gueyger for your kind letter. We truly appreciate the love that is spilling out of this piece that follows. Every valid contributor to this publication has a part in this, and should feel some satisfaction from Ernesto's letter. Thank you, and you're welcome! Ernesto writes us from the Sacramento County Jail in Elk Grove, CA

enhancing and promoting unity throughout each reader's heart. One person feels something "within" and "identifies" or can "correspond" with it, and spreads the message to someone else, or like me, shares each poem, writing; personal experience, life-story, hard-time, with everyone, and anyone, willing to hear.

I do with pure passion, and deep respect, admire the people that do it also, and to those of you who apply others guidance to find a way through, that wisdom is unstoppable. It has the power to go and it is in all of us! The power of "The Beat Within!" Your friend till eternity.



E MONEY

Well, well, well, we are all in for a treat, this week we have the powerful commentary of E-Money to included in the pages of The Beat Within. Here we have yet another stellar contributor who has not forgotten his roots from his SF/YGC Beat workshop days, to today where he writes us from New Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA. E, is a mere few months away from paroling from prison. We cannot wait for the day we can embrace him with a hug! We first met E, as many of you know today, when he was a very focused detainee in the max unit in SF/YGC. From the Hall, like Dat, found himself tried as an adult doing CDC time. Despite the pain and the struggle of his years incarcerated, this man has endured plenty, his writing always comes out on top and with hope. Read on and hear his words and tell us that E Money doesn't have love for the readers of The Beat Within!

The Struggle

I thought I'd start this piece off with a few scriptures from the Bible to help you get a clearer understanding of the message I'm trying to deliver to you. Try to feel my pain for a minute if you could...

"It is written in the Holy Koran that Allah created man to face difficulties. God has brought us all onto the Earth to face one difficulty after another, and it is the facing of these difficulties and the overcoming of these difficulties that helps us to improve our character and improve ourselves."

"There is no difficulty that man is faced with that man does not have the ability to overcome, if he will summon the strength of his being against that obstacle in the pathway of his progress."

"God ordained struggle because without struggle, you cannot bring out yourself that which God has deposited within you."

With that said, they say if you were to search into the past, you'll find the tools to help you understand the future. If you were to take a long, hard look back on your own life and experiences, maybe it'll help you understand who you are, why you feel the way you feel and do the evil things you do. You see, when you're able to understand you, you will understand how to improve your condition, but yet this process cannot happen without struggle. No success comes without struggle. Struggle is life and everything in it.

I remember I used to say that, "I wish on the day that I can get rid of all this pain and struggle." Back then I wasn't intelligent enough to understand that the struggle is the very thing that has made, and, kept me strong. I used to want to ask God why is it that He allow me to experience so much pain? Now I understand. Without the struggle, I wouldn't have nowhere near the insight and vision that I have today. Now I under "Tupac," (RIP), when he said: "That in which don't kill me will only make me stronger." Prison hasn't broken me; it just created me into more of a God. You see, this struggle has allowed me to see things you can't even imagine in your dreams. This struggle is making me freer with every push, and these pushes aren't getting any softer. The very day I stop struggling is the day I'll give the man of struggle an advantage over me; is the day this brain and body will be considered dead; and then I guess this cold world will steal the very warmth of my blood!

If you were to look at this complicated his-story. You'll come to learn that many struggled and scarified their lives just to see you free. Why don't you take an advantage of it? How did it become all about you when there would be no such thing as you if it wasn't for they, and all they have gave to see you shine brighter than the very night stars that gives us light? You have men and women who have sacrificed their lives with the last hope of that their death will bring you your freedom and this is how you inconsiderate souls repay them? We walk on grounds filled with unlimited millions of our ancestor's blood spilled for the struggle. Please don't disrespect it with your foolishness! These people I speak upon was real soldiers and real warriors. Most of y'all isn't even worthy of these titles you are running around here calling yourself. Just because you have a few scratches doesn't mean you're a warrior. Just because you are willing to go to war doesn't mean you're qualified to be a soldier. Most of y'all are going to war with blind man eyes anyway.

It would be hard for me, even if I had billions to call myself successful with the forever living thought of knowing that there are millions of kids that are still struggling and dying from starvation. It would be hard for me to call myself a soldier or warrior if I got to go to some country and kill kids to attain this title. If this is what y'all consider to be a soldier, I guess I'm really in hell.

I've been struggling since the day of my birth and it hasn't stopped yet. This pain has been burning inside of me like fire in a dragon and you can believe the wisdom is allowing me to feel way higher than 33 degrees. This struggle is here to stay ladies and gentleman, and the day you embrace it is the day you'll take control of yet another part of your life.

Real soldiers stand up against their fears, cowards keep on running until death comes and find them. Everything is willing to struggle but you. Look at the caterpillar struggling to be a butterfly. Look at the little bird, see how it pecks its way out of the egg...the shell. It struggles to come forward. Then, that bird struggles to get its balance and it struggles to fly. Look at the ants who struggle to work together to get food from one place to another. It's crazy to know that even ants got more unity and struggle than some of us.

If you were to take five minutes out of your time, you'll see that life got struggle written all over it. No one can escape struggle and God made sure we remember this every morning. We struggle just to awaken. Some just struggle harder than others. He who struggles the hardest will eventually see the light quicker than the rest, and I'm not talking about struggling surely for money for "what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?" (Farrakan)

It is a verse in the book of the Koran that says on the day of judgment that if a man owned all of the wealth that is in the Earth, he would ransom it to keep himself from the chastisement of God that is so great and what is it about the wealth that people abundantly seek that is so little, that you would give it all away just to save your life in a time of trouble?

This struggle is like trying to climb up this mountain called success with no equipment but my faith depending on my bare hands and my bare feet, searching for sunshine in a rainy world that intends to see me slip and fall; but despite the odds I know, I must keep on climbing or die on my bloody knees praying for a miracle that's never coming, for God helps those who help themselves. The higher I climb the more temptations that comes my way. The devil is in my left ear offering me drugs for exchange of my vision, but God knows I'm way stronger than that, so in his name I take another step up this mountain and that's when I notice Lucifer in my other ear tempting me with hot chicks that goes by the name of Evil, Poison, and Superbad, but once again I had to reject his offer, for I'm no longer a player for the devil, but for God. As you see, I'm in too deep. I have shed blood in this battle with struggle. If you were to look into my past you'll see blood on the rocks leading to my current predicament on this here mountain.

As I attempt to climb higher I feel my body resisting for no more, but my mind is that of a Son of God and it's telling me "E-Money," the world depends on you. So, as you see I have no choice but to keep climbing.

Nobody ever said that life was going to be easy, so why are you under the impression that it is? Within everyday and every step of this mountain, I feel these sharp rocks digging into my bones and it makes me wonder how much longer can I endure this pain? For I've been climbing this mountain for 20 something odd years seeking to reach the top that has already proven to be unlimited. I've been climbing seeking for this girl name Easy, and then I think to myself, maybe Easy comes after one has grasp and accepted the concept of hard? Maybe, I'm on the wrong mountain searching for a lost hope and not trying to accept that we've been cursed to endure a long life full of pain and struggle; or maybe, I'm on the right mountain and the higher I climb the more I'll be enlighten.

The more I learn, the freer I will become, they say, "One can do whatever he puts his mind to." Well I'm going to stay putting my mind to this mountain, (if it be God's will), with dreams of liberating you all, for I've come to realize that there are only two ways I can actually be free. That's through the strengthening of my mind, (struggle), and through the love, happiness, joy, and freedom of you all. I'm going to keep on climbing this mountain, even if it cost me my death. That's how much E-Money is in love with you all!

Death is inevitable but life is a miracle. A miracle that our ancestors have explored by the permission of God and have build us a heaven on earth for those who struggle hard enough to attain it. There are no special forces holding you back from your heaven, only men.

This day does not belong to one man but to all, you are the only one that can claim your position. You see, war is everyday, some is physical, but the majority is mental. Sorry to say, but if you are not struggling you are losing this battle. This is not my fight to lose. This war has been in existence way before my time. I have no choice, but to fight this struggle and pass the sword to the next generation once my time has come.

The struggle must continue. For a man who lacks courage and vision is already dead. Like I said before, one of the ways I can be free is through my struggle. I'm going to keep fighting this thing called war rather you are with me or not. No man can give you freedom but you. Freedom is not a materialistic being. Freedom is within the mind. The success of the war, bondage, pain, and suffering is through education, is through the renewal of your mind is through struggle.

"I don't want to see the end without living the beginning."



DARNELL HOLYFIELD

Two more fine pieces from our consistent, powerful, no-nonsense BWO writer, Darnell Holyfield. We were particularly impressed with "The Usual Suspect." He makes a number of important points in this piece we can all learn from. And then he steps out of his normal style and throws down a flow in "Lost in the Jungle." Keep writing, Darnell. Darnell writes from the Sierra Conservation Center in Jamestown, CA.

The Usual Suspect

As I look at this world today I see a lot of anger and suspicion when it comes to dealing with people of color. To me, it seems like being a minority in this country is like being born with a cancer or mental disability that only your race has. And yet we are the first ones to stand up and fight for this country that we live in, but are hated so much in it. I must admit that I am proud to be the color that I am today, because it allows me to see the way we are looked upon, from where we live to the way we act. Even from the other races that interact with us every day, to those who are looking at us from the outside view, like we are a race of aliens of some sort.

It seems to me that no matter how much money or education we are allowed to get as minorities, we are still the first to be looked at when a crime is committed in America. Even the famous minorities are the first to be prosecuted or ridiculed when they break the law; they are even talked about and treated in a way that their name is no good in the so-called rich society world. But it is okay when they have young European college and high school girls showing their body and doing much more on TV, while the cameraman is making millions of dollars off of it. But the media shamefully tries to blackball a superstar for flashing a piece of her body at an award show.

It is not a coincidence to me that America attacks a country of color, claiming that they have weapons of mass destruction, or that they are terrorists preparing for a war. As the president says, we need to put an end to terrorism, so we start in a country of color, but we still have terrorists living here in America. The CIA, FBI, ATF, DOD, Bloods, Crips, MOB, Mexican Mafia, are the terrorists we have living here in America today, and we can't control them, but we go all the way across the country to stop terrorism and a control a country of color. Once again, we are the usual suspects for the crimes they think we commit or that have been done.

Falsely accused? I think not, because we, as minorities, have to take some blame for our actions and the way that we carry ourselves in this country we live in today. Things have changed a lot since the 50s, 60s, and 70s, but they are still locking us up for crimes we didn't commit. And they are still killing us in the streets and beating us on TV, and they are calling it justice. Now it seems that it is a crime to kill or beat someone's pet, but it is ok to do it to a minority. We even save the whales in the ocean and put the wild back in the wild where they can be safe away from humans, but we kill, beat, and lock up the minorities.

We are the usual suspects, but are we that much different from the other races, or is it really a crime in this country to be a minority? We are the first to be convicted and the first to be killed in the line of fire. We are the first to be let go from a job that we have worked our tails off at for about 10 or 20 years. We are the first to be pulled over when we are driving with our families and friends — the usual suspects, that's what we are in the eyes of this country.

How can it be justice when we are last to get justification for crime that we did not commit? And how can we be thankful for a promotion when we are the last ones to be promoted or vindicated but are the first to be ridiculed, and the last to get restitution.

Things will only change if we change them ourselves, don't be a statistic. Be someone that changes the world and the minds of everyone that comes in contact with you. Look at the world today and be the first minority that is not a usual suspect. And stop the rest of us from becoming the usual suspects in this world.

**Let your mind and your voice
be your weapon
when you plan to attack,
because only you can control
your actions when the time
comes to act.**

Lost In The Jungle

My Brothers and Sisters

How much longer must we suffer

before we see the truth sitting right in front of us?

And when will it come time for us to stop blaming
the so-called white man, set the guns and drugs down, and
get off that self pity bus?

It's time that you know that your mind is the weapon,
it is stronger than your fists.

When it is used in the right way, like taking your name off of
society's statistics failing list.

Realize the fact that you are a unique woman/man
and be willing to die to make a stand.

Your hue could never deny you your proper future,
but your ignorance and lack of wanting to know will hinder
from the proper tenure.

Education is our righteousness; it is also our key.

How could we forget that it was educated black man
that opened today's doors for you and me?

A mind is a terrible thing to waste.

When will we understand that we are a special, unique
species that was here in the beginning,
and we'll be here until the bitter end?

It is our choice to be what we choose,
because gangbanging and dealing drugs
is a game where we all will lose.

Let your mind and your voice be your weapon
when you plan to attack,

because only you can control your actions when the time
comes to act.

Patience is our virtue

because only a fool rushes to follows the blind,
think about it, "if we continue on this path we're on,
we will always see ourselves behind."

And this goes out to the young and the old,
the dumb, smart, and blind.

Stop blaming others for the mistakes that you make, step up
to the plate and use your mind.

Think before we speak and act,
take the ball of life and try not to fumble.

Because the bad choices that we make
will keep us lost in the jungle.

BRYCE

Bryce, a young detainee at Maricopa Juvenile Hall SEF, in Arizona, is on a tear with the following five pieces. We're not sure if some confidence of his has been violated recently or not, but he gives excellent advice about staying out of other people's business, not to mention some important thoughts about bullies (low self-esteem) and depression (with accompanying art). We don't know much about this young man — but we know he can write, and that he can think.

Bullies

People sometimes feel the need to pick on someone smaller than themselves because they feel small themselves. This is all about their self-esteem, and how they feel about themselves inside.

It accomplishes absolutely nothing. It proves only that the perpetrator is not mentally developed enough to find a way to deal with his emotions. It also shows that the perpetrator is judging people by what he hears from the gossip of others.

Don't Share Personal Shhh

Should you share personal information if you don't want others to know your business? Absolutely not! If you don't want people to judge you, then don't reveal your personal information, such as your charges, etc.

If you feel comfortable enough to share that type of information, then you should be ready to accept the consequences of what others are going to think about their reactions to the information you share.

People sometimes feel the need to pick on someone smaller than themselves because they feel small themselves.

Mind Your Own Business

Gossiping seems to be second nature to most. Most people actively engage in gossip. Why is that? Is it because their lives are missing something and they fill it with shhh, talking about everyone else?

Is it okay to talk about others? I think if your friends are gossiping, you should not join in because it's wrong to talk about others. It goes back to minding your own business. Worry about yourself.

You should mind your own business, in general, because of three main reasons: one, other people's actions, past and thoughts are of no concern to us; two, we have enough things to worry about without getting into the other people's business; and three, there is no reason to concern ourselves other than to gain information to gossip about.

Other people's actions, past, and thoughts are of no concern to us because they belong to other people. There is not one good reason to pry in anyone's private business unless they have been given that information by the person whose business it belongs to. Even then, the information can be turned down.

We have enough things to worry about without getting into other people's business because that's how life is. Other people's business belongs solely to them. There is not one good reason to get into other people's business.

Government Influence

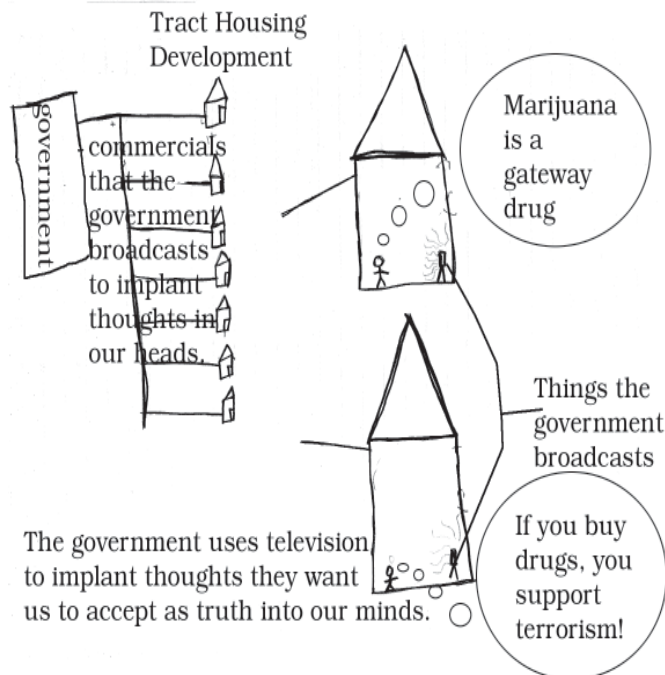
This is a vision/picture that came to me while I was stoned watching TV one night. An anti drug commercial came on. I realized that in my heightened state of consciousness that hundreds of millions of people are influenced by the things that the government sends out via cable television. This may be one reason that the government has stood firm on keeping marijuana illegal.



It proves only that the perpetrator is not mentally developed enough to find a way to deal with his emotions.

Depression

Depression is when your heart is feeling sad,
'Cause you're sittin' in your cell reflectin' on all you done bad,
Now all we want to do is to get out and be glad,
But then we go to court and get time so we're mad,
Mad at ourselves for all we done wrong,
Askin' why we always had to hit that bong.



SIR TURTLE

Sir Turtle writes to us from Corcoran State Prison's SHU. He drops the highly anticipated Part Four of "My Life." This well written chapter is filled with juvenile and street violence, girls, lust, incarceration and two pregnancies. We're sure this chapter will hold your readers of long stories, and we're sure you'll also find the painful lessons that come from this period of Sir Turtle's life. With that said we can't wait for Part Five. Sir Turtle also drops a poem for us that he dedicates to Baby Munchkin. Read on folks, there's plenty!

My Life (Part IV)

Now I'm on my way back to the Hall to see what they are going to do with me. I'm back with all my friends in the Hall, telling myself I had it made and why couldn't I just get along with everybody, and do my 6 months in the group home, so I could go home? Well, I called my mom to let her know that I'm back in the Hall 'cause I messed up, and didn't think before I acted. But I was in a deep situation where I had to fight back 'cause some white kids said that when they find me alone — they were going to kill me. I told her that it was 6 on 1 and I had no choice, but to defend myself and told her that I went outside looking for some rocks that would do the job. And I also told her that I put the rocks in a sock and near the end I tied it in a knot, so the rocks will stay in place and the first chance I got, I went off on them. They were all in a circle when I rushed them and when I was hitting some, they were hitting me back with fat sticks, and that's when staff came to break us up. And I told the staff that these 6 white kids told me that when they got me by myself they were going to kill me.

Now I told my mom the reason why they sent me back to the Hall was 'cause I was a threat to their group home. Well my mom came to visit me in the Hall and I could tell she was very, very disappointed in me for what I did, and she told me, "Don't you ever listen and learn?" She also told me that she always tired to raise me right, but I told her, "Then how come you when you were never around when I was growing up?" I also told her that I remember the times when she came home from work. You wouldn't stay home, and you would leave to go back to Huron and party with your friends. Then I could see the tears in her eyes as I said that, and I apologized to her for what I said.

Well it's the year 1988, and my birthday came up and I was turning 14 years old, and the staff at the Hall threw me a party for my birthday, and the cook baked me a cake. There was one night when these four white dudes in the Hall, where I was, came up to me where I was playing pool. And said they wanted to talk to me about escaping from the Hall and they needed my help. So I told them let me finish my pool game, and we'll talk and they said okay.

I finished playing my game of pool with this girl I use to mess with named Kelly. Then me and these four white dudes go sit down and talked, and then I asked them what do you need me for? They told me that they needed me to get and keep Mrs. Sherman facing you with her back to everybody showing me how to fold towels and clothes. I told them that I could do that for them, but I asked them, "Why?" They said that I don't need to know that right now on that part and I said, "okay." I said, "When do you want to do this?" And they said, "The day after tomorrow." Now don't get me wrong, I told Mrs. Sherman that she should pose in lingerie for a calendar and I'll buy her calendar and put it on my wall, 'cause woman you so sexy and so damn fine. She told me to stop, 'cause I'm making her blush too much. That night I went to bed and kept pondering to myself, while walking in circles, thinking that they were just going to knock her out and lock her in the office. But my mind wasn't ready for what really happened and took place.

So when the day finally came up, it was after dinner, when everybody came out for dayroom time. Well everybody got into place that they were suppose to be,

and I called Mrs. Sherman over to show me how to fold the clothes and towels. Well, she came up on my side and I grabbed her around the waist, and lead her to the other side of the pool table and I knew that it was that last time I'd ever get to have my arm around her like this. Then all of a sudden I saw this white dude named Corey come up and hit her in the back of her head with so much force that I could hear the blows connect on her head. He hit her with a wooden cribbage board repeatedly, and I heard her scream for help until she fell to the floor bleeding from her head wound, and she called me for help, and I just stood there in shock to what I'd seen and did nothing to help her.

The other guys locked up Mr. Higgins in a room then grabbed the keys off Mrs. Sherman's belt and went to the back door, and fumbled with the keys to find the right one to open the back door leading to the yard. Then they grabbed their shoes and split, and two of them went to the back, and the other two went to the visiting room to throw a chair through a window to get out.

I saw Mrs. Sherman get up, and go to the control desk to hit the silent alarm to get the cops here at the Hall. That's when I grabbed my shoes, and put them on and ran to the back to climb over the fence to leave. As I was about to climb over that fence Mr. Higgins comes out 'cause someone let him out, and he told me if I climb over that fence it's CYA for me, and I told him I don't give a damn anymore. Then he went back inside and shut the door and I left.

I turned my shirt inside out so nobody could see the name of the Juvenile Hall on the shirt. Then I ran into these girls that were about 18 or 21 years old, and I asked them where are they headed? And they said Fresno, and I told them that I got stranded here while my family was visiting some friends and asked if they could give me a ride back to Fresno with them, and they said sure they can, and I said thank you. Well, there were four girls, and then there was me in the back seat with two fine ass girls and then we saw some cops at a roadblock checking cars for the guys that escaped from the Juvenile Hall. Well, the girls that I was with found out I was one of the guys that escaped, and I told them that I wasn't going to hurt them at all. And one of the girls in the back told me don't worry just lay down and put your head down on my lap, and I did. Then I realized that she had on a short skirt with no panties on as they covered me with blankets to hide me. Well we got passed the cops road block and they waited until it was safe for me to get up, but when they told me it was all clear, and I could get up, they found out I was asleep with a smile on my face in the same position I was put in at the road block.

They announced on the radio that five juveniles escaped from the Yreka Juvenile Hall and that they are armed and extremely dangerous, so be careful and if you see them call your nearest police station. Well, we got to my town called Fresno, and they said, "Where do you want to get dropped off at?" And I told them I didn't have anywhere to stay right now, so they took me home with them and I stayed with them for about two and a half weeks. They were so nice with me the whole time, and I stayed in the living room, and they would come out in their lingerie that was see through with their bras and panties and not giving a care in the world if I was looking or not. They treated me like I was their baby brother. And then I found out that they were all sisters and they were going to Fresno State College and they would ask me if

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they look sexy, and I would tell them hell yeah, you look sexy. I realized that the whole time I was with them, the apartment would smell like perfume 24 hours a day — 7 days a week.

I remember this one sister would come out in her silk g-string and no bra and sit in a chair in front of me and I was like, damn. I wish I were older 'cause I would tell her lets go to bed and forget school. Or there be times when she would wait until all of her sisters would leave for school until she came out with nothing on while I was watching TV and me being the age I was she was the first one I experienced sex with. She was a good teacher at showing sex and she was showing me the making of sex.

I stayed at their apartment all day until they came home and when they did their friends would come over and party with them. Some would give me some marijuana that's already broken down to \$5.00 bags, \$10.00 bags, and \$20.00 bags, and tell me to hit the streets, and go make your money. Which I did 'cause he told me that what he gave me was \$500.00 worth of marijuana. I sold all the weed and then came back inside with the money I made until he accused me of stealing \$500.00 worth of dope and then he started beating me up until the girls told him to leave me alone, but he didn't listen because he was too high off some drug.

I ran into the kitchen and came out with a frying pan and told him, "I'll teach you to beat me you punk ass sucker." And he told me I ain't got the guts to hit him. And when he was rolling up a joint I rushed him and starting hitting him and telling him that I was going to kill him. He was screaming, "Get him off me, help!" He got up and left and said he'll be back with some friends to really hurt me, but I wasn't scared. That night me and the girl that I had my first experience with, went to bed together and got it on without a condom. She said she was on the pill and we made love all night. Then in the morning I left saying goodbye to them and I split and took off to the streets of Fresno.

I ran into my cousins in Fresno and told them not to say anything to my aunt or anybody else. I was at a block party with my cousins and I met this fine Mexican girl that was about a year younger than me named Lisa, they called her Lil' Clown. We start partying all day and night, and we ended up in the room on the bed, and under the covers, making out with each other. Then we make love, but she tells me to be gentle with her 'cause she's a virgin. And I ended up popping her maiden hood as she told me she wanted to give me her virginity to. Well I ended up seeing her and walking to school with her then split to my cousin's house, and kicked back with all her homeboys and home girls. Until some of my cousin's homeboys wanted to act hard in front of my cousin's home girls, and my cousin's to see if I'm down. I told them "You don't want to mess with me, so leave me alone." But they wouldn't listen to me, but I always kept my mind as my martial arts instructor always told us and that was never let our anger get out of control, and only to use the martial arts in self-defense. Every time they would throw a punch or a kick I would either block it or step to the side hella quick and laugh at them for being too slow.

I was learning the secrets of martial arts for self-defense, speed, and power hits with my feet and hands. Then my cousins and her home girls were laughing at their homeboys so hard that their homeboys got hella pissed and told me that they were going to teach me an ass beating I'll never forget for having my cousins and their home girls laughing at them. But what I didn't know was that Lisa showed up and I forgot that I was supposed to pick her up. Time flies when you're having fun with your cousins and their fine ass home girls. That's when I heard Lisa say to the homeboys, which I found out that they were all homies, "Don't hurt my boyfriend," and I said,

"What did you say?" She said, "You're my boyfriend." And I told her that I'll be your boyfriend if you be my girlfriend. And she said, "Yes," That she'll be my girlfriend and ran up and gave me a kiss.

Then my cousins and her home girls, and my girlfriend, Lil' Clown watched as their homeboys formed a circle around me for my ass beating I was to get. When I seen the one in the front rush me, I moved hella quick and delivered a kick to his gut. He stumbled back with the force of my kick.

The girls were like "Damn... did you see that?" Then it was on and all of them rushed me at once, and I was blocking, punching with so much force and kicks that they were falling down on the ground holding their broken nose's, screaming in pain from broken knees, arms, and a couple of ribs, while the last homeboy looked at all his homies on the ground, then at me. And I told him what are you going to do? And when I said that he rushed me, and when he came real near, I jumped into the air hella quick and delivered a 180 degree power kick to his chest that knocked him off his feet and on the ground, knocked out. Then I got into my fighting stance waiting and waiting for something to happen and nothing did. Then Lil' Clown came up to me and threw her arms around me, and gave me a kiss on the lips. Then her homegirls and my cousins went and woke up their last homeboy that was on the ground. After a while they took their homies to the hospital to get their noses, arms, legs set for a cast and to get a bandage wrapped around one of their homie's ribs so they can heal. Well Lisa and me go in the house to my cousin's room and shut the door. Putting a sign I made on a piece of cardboard that said "Do Not Enter!" But my cousin's parents were not home at the time, so Lisa and me got busy once again without protection.

Well some people saw me and recognized me from the picture the police were showing around, trying to find me to lock me up in Juvenile Hall. Well they called the cops and told them that they saw me at such and such place and that's where they'll find me, and sure enough the next day while I was kicking back in the front yard drinking some orange juice, five cars of the Fresno Police Department showed up, and said " Freeze, don't move!" And I said "Ahh Shhh", and I got up hella fast and ran through the house. They were like, damn did you see how quick that sucker moved? I made a run for the back door just as my cousin opened it, and I said, "Got to go, sorry, can't stay, but tell Lisa I'll call or write her a letter soon." And my cousin said, "Alright." The cops were barely coming into the backyard, from the front and alley. When I seen my cousin's trampoline next to the side fence of her neighbor's fence, as I heard the cops say "We got you now and there's no place to run." Then I said "Goodbye" and was over the fence quick and gone.

I had to watch out for my cousin's neighbor's dogs 'cause they had two big German Shepards that were hella mean, and when they gave chase on me, I had to jump another fence to get to the streets and it was on. That's when I seen the cop get on his radio and ask for more back up, and told them where I was headed. And finally they surrounded me and I had no where to go, so I gave up and got put into handcuffs, and put into the back seat of the cop car as the cop said, "Damn boy, I never seen anybody move that quick when we rolled up on you."

I didn't say nothing to them, when they told me that they are taking me to the Fresno County Juvenile Hall for awhile until the sheriff comes to pick you up to take you back to the Yreka Juvenile Hall to go to court for your escape. Well I got to the Juvenile Hall in Fresno and they told me I was going to B-Unit until they came to pick me up to take me back. And I asked them, can I call home, and let my people know what's up, and that I was now in the Fresno Juvenile Hall. And they said "Yes you can."

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SIR TURTLE (CONT.)

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So the first person I called was my girlfriend Lisa at my cousin's house.

When my cousin picked up the phone, I told her to put my girlfriend on the phone right now. When Lisa got on the phone she asked me where I was at, and I told her, "In the Fresno Juvenile Hall waiting for the sheriff to come and pick me up, and take me to the Juvenile Hall I had escaped from. Then I told her, "Give me your address and phone number, so I can start writing you letters baby." And she gave me her address and phone number, and before I got off the phone with Lisa I told her that I loved her no matter what. And she said, "I love you too Papa Turtle."

Now what really tripped me out is that those four college girls that went to Fresno State, well, one of the sisters got a hold of my address to the Juvenile Hall, and wrote me a letter saying that her sister, Gina is one month pregnant from you 'cause she told us that you guys had unprotected sex, and she lied to you being on the pill." I wrote Gina a letter telling her, "Why did she lie to me?" And I also asked her, "What are you going to do now?" She wrote me back saying she's going to keep the baby and when she has it, she'll tell her parents that she don't know who the father is. Well, Gina was like 18 years old. She stood about 5'11" inches, long brown hair down passed her butt, brown eyes, an olive cream skin and a body like a model that will make you do a double take when she walks by.

Well I'm in the Fresno Juvenile Hall for a month and a half, and writing Lisa letters back and forth. And she's sending me photos of her looking hella sexy for her Papa Turtle. And a couple of pictures of her and the home girls from the 'hood of Fresno all dressed up looking sexy.

Now as for Lisa, she stood about 5' 8" inches tall, brown eyes, long brown hair with some bleach in it, brown sugar skin that taste so delicious. A body that don't quit. One day she sends me a letter and a photo of her and my cousin's telling me that she's 2 1/2 weeks pregnant, and I'm like "Damn, not again", and that when I go back up to the Juvenile Hall. She'll stay by my side no matter what happens, and that she will always love me 'cause I was her first to give her virginity to.

I wrote her back asking her what does she plan on doing with the baby in her womb that she's carrying, and I also told her whatever she decides, I'll support her on her decision on what she wants to do with the baby. And she writes and tells me she's going to keep the baby. And I said, "Okay." Then I wrote her back saying that it's settled then, and I told her in the letter that if it's a boy, I want her to name it after me, and if it's a girl, to name it after her.

The next day the sheriff showed up hella early for me to take the trip back up to Yreka Juvenile Hall, and she (the sheriff) asked the staff "Where's the criminal at?" And they say that he's coming right now.

Well, I get to where the female sheriff is and she says, "Are you ready young man?" And I said, "Yes Ms. Officer."

In my possession I had about like 60 letters from my girlfriend Lisa that would write me about four letters a day. Now as I'm looking at this female officer, she looks about like she's in her mid 30's, got a nice slim body that her uniform hugs her body so tight, and I asked her where's her partner? And she says, "It's only me and you on the long trip up to Yreka Juvenile, so we might as well get acquainted right now." As she puts on the waist chains, handcuffs and shackles and I inhale her perfume, and I tell her she smells nice. And she says, "Thank you, now lets go."

Well, we got on the freeway heading there and she asks me if I would like to listen to the radio. And I said, "Yes, Ms. Officer." And she tells me to call her by her first

name, and that is Tracie. And I told her that she can pick either my two names to talk to me, and they are Jesse or Lil' Turtle. And she picks Lil' Turtle. We started to get to know each other real good and we began to become friends in that period of time. And she told me all about herself and that she's not married. Has one little girl about my age, she likes to go dancing, movies, cooking, and her favorite cartoon character is Yosemite Sam. And I tell her my favorite character is "Speedy Gonzalez." She asked me if I was hungry, and in my mind I was saying only for you, but I told her, "Yes, I'm hungry." So she tells me don't say nothing about this, but we'll stop at Carl Jr. and get something to eat. And I said, "Okay." She orders me two hamburgers and some fries, and we sat in the car and talked and listened to the radio. Then when we were done, we'll split for the freeway.

Well, we get to the Yreka Juvenile Hall and I get booked again, and Tracie tells me, "It's been nice knowing you Lil' Turtle and I'll pray for you." And I told her, "Bye." Now I'm back in the Halls for my crime and the staff is hella pissed off at me. And they handcuff me and drag me off to my cell. And when they finally got the handcuffs off, I pace in circles and started pondering on what they are going to do with me and how much time I'm going to get. While I'm still pacing around my circle, Ms. Sherman comes to my door and knocks softly. And I say, "Nobody's home, go away!" But she keeps knocking on my door until I go up to my door and she opens the tray slot and gives me five magazines, five pens, three writing tablets, ten stamped envelopes, four fat, fat books, and all the letters I brought with me from the Fresno Juvenile Hall, and a note saying I missed you and welcome back.

The four white dudes didn't get caught until a month later and the sheriff in Oregon State brought them back to the Hall from the Oregon State Jail. I was only fourteen years old in 1988 when I did this crime and stayed in the Hall for a long time going to court.

When my mom found out what I did, she broke down and cried her heart out. Then when she came to visit me, the staff didn't want to let me have my visit until their boss said give him a his visit. My mom asked me, "Why do you want to break my heart? And what did I ever do to you to treat your mother like this?" And I told her, "You married that doctor, but I forgive you, anyways." She also asked me if I ever think before I acted, and climbed over that fence, or what the consequences would be for escaping from here? And I said, "No." She also said she'll be by my side while I do my time for my crime. Then those four white dudes and me went to court to see how much time we were going to get. To be continued...



Thinking Of You

I could think of the many wonders
in this world I've waited to see,
I could think of all the treasures
that perhaps one day could belong to me.
I could think of the stars in the sky,
I could compare them to the tears
that have fallen from your eyes.
I could think of the whale and the size of its heart,
I could think of the ant,
the smallest creature yet they're so smart.
I could think of the birds
and wonder what is it exactly that they sing,
I could think of all sorts of pleasures
and happiness that they may bring.
I could think of almost anything, but they are just thoughts
and dreams that may never come true,
But I know one thing that's sure to bring me happiness and
that's every moment I spend thinking of you.
Love always...

HERMAN THOMAS JOHNSON, JR.

Herman Thomas
Johnson, Jr. writes

is another politically and socially charged BWO. He is calling all of us to think, and if we're not imprisoned, to vote out the self-centered politicians we have in office and find those who are willing and able to represent all of us, especially those who have been and are being oppressed by the government we currently live under. Herman is encouraging all of us to get fired up to change what we don't like in this world. Herman writes us from the Corcoran SHU in Corcoran, CA.

Sisters And Brothers

There is time for us to come together unity. There is a lot you don't know about me as a political writer and political prisoner, before and now, of this life of struggle for freedom.

But what a little good luck, I hope to share with you a general idea of what we political prisoners and prisoners of war have gone through and what I've been going through the past eight years in solitary, as well as what I've been thinking about during the fifteen and half years I've been incarcerated.

Within this writing, I will mention some of mine, and your, great failings, comrades who just tighten up their struggle and who also died doing so. Within these names, some are still alive with us today. Some are now within our ages of early "terms" who have been all around the state of California with all people of color to fight that struggle for the lives of all people.

Some of us were sent off to some California man-made prison slave camp, which I was at the age of only 24 for a crime I did not commit and could not commit unless my own life depended on it — namely to kill another person.

The reason they give for sending a person to death, to a prison of life, is to remake the person into a law-abiding citizen. Yet in reality, I have, with other people of color, been cast apart into a non-living world that is full of dreams, fantasies and shattered hopes, hatred, rage and desolated emptiness. We prisoners are called the outcasts, the misfits. We are the so-called major problems . . .

Many people, both blacks and whites, seem to have a very negative mindset with respect to how they view people of color in these so-called prisons=slave camps. It is a prevalent view that the imprisoned are hopelessly violent, ignorant and expendable and, therefore, deserve to be treated with vicious brutality each and every day so as to properly punish them for their crimes.

This mindset is so widespread, even in the Black and Mexican and poor white communities, because it represents the views radio and the television, printed by the damn media, politicians and "educational" institutions have put into the minds of people, regardless of color. Just take a good look at the assholes you always vote into office, the ones who continue to lock us away into these prison slave camps and take our own damn freedom and give money to other countries instead of our own country, you know, the people. For instance, presidents 1) G. H. W. Bush Sr., 2) W.J. Clinton, 3) G. W. Bush, Jr.; Governors 1) P. Wilson, 2) G. Davis, just to name a few my brothers and sisters.

Each of these so-called politicians, with their damn politics is guilty of all charges as war criminals and of lying to the people and of killing innocent people, mostly people of color, who are Black, Mexicans and poor White. Now we political prisoners, who become prisoners of war in our time

because of our life struggles for freedom.

My people, do you all remember short years ago when President George Walker Bush, Jr. was governor of Texas when a great brother, father, son, African American male, who was indeed hanged and drug behind a truck of four or five white men all over Texas dirt roads? When the people of Texas and the brother's kids and family went to ex-Gov Bush's office to have him sign a hate crime bill into Texas law, he stated: "No, he would do no such thing." The brother so murdered was named James Bird. So now it's time for the people of color, black, Mexican, and poor white, to stand up and vote these assholes out of the White House. You see how he started this war just over some damn oil and a threat that was made against his own father in 1990 through 1993. So people be strong and fight against these damn devils. Now!

So how many, many times do we, the people of a so-called great country, vote these damn criminals into office then cry your damn eyes out because these so-called criminals in office are destroying your and my your families' lives. I have been telling so many of our people since 1976 about these so-called damn power-minded criminals. Now if you and your loved ones don't want these so-called assholes in office as our governors and presidents. So why don't you get off your backsides for once in your life and come together to vote in your own race into office? There are more people of color in this country to vote into office — Blacks, Mexicans, and Indians — if we come together it can be done.

If you don't fight now and stop acting and crying like damn babies when you put them into office in the first place, then we'll continue to put into these prison slave camps our kids, sisters, brothers, mothers, fathers, who'll become weak instead of becoming strong.

While it is true that no one wishes to become a damn victim of crime, and most people do not want drug dealer and gangs in their communities, as well as pimps, the public must come to realize that the scapegoating of prisoners is not the answer to these damn problems.

We, the people, must begin to recognize, in a broader manner, that people in prison have, for the most part, turned to crime, gangs, and drugs because they themselves have been victimized by cruel ghetto conditions, lack of livable wage jobs, and by a totally false educational system. Often they have been brutalized by members of their own families as they grew up. It is not uncommon that family members resorted to violence against their own children because they themselves, "the adult family members," have been placed under the undue and cruel realities of living a ghetto existence in the face of media-viewed affluence. Instead of taking out their frustrations on the governmental officials, these often well-meaning adults take it out on their children, sometimes even under the guise of love.

HERMAN THOMAS JOHNSON, JR. (CONT.)

continued from previous page

Then, when their children turn to drugs and crime, they can't figure out why.

These factors add up to a corrupt society, which dehumanizes its ghettoized people and turns them against each other. This is what causes many people to break down emotionally and psychologically, and often leads them, as stated above, to be violent towards their own children. Often it causes them to seek drugs as an escape from the cruelty of not being good enough to have what an American is supposed to have. The children, confused by this behavior on the part of those who love them, then become involved in crime as a means of psychological survival and to avenge themselves for their afflictions.

The very people who condemn the prisoner have failed to work to change and confront the deplorable living conditions that are evident in so many communities in this society, which causes the family dysfunction and the subsequently high crime rate in the first place. People have failed to organize and work with their political representatives to hold them accountable and to demand that they force businesses to pay living wages to their employees, which starts from our damn presidents to our California governors. They have failed to call for measures such as cutting the workday or work week so that we can guarantee full employment to everyone. Yes, they have failed to demand that the schools teach the true history and get its value system in order. Instead, business, universities and governments continue to promote racism, just like our United States president, George Walker Bush, pay other countries and pay extravagant salaries to the few and yet totally inadequate salaries to the hard-working multitudes, causing high-level disparity amongst citizens, resentment and crime.

And, of course, unemployment has been allowed to remain a rampant and vicious societal disease. In other words, within the Black, Mexican, and poor White communities, the employment rate is low and money is being removed from our neighborhoods and from these prison institutions' education departments only to stop our families from being educated. I, myself, had the opportunity to be moved here at Corcoran's "correctional" facility security housing unit in March of 1999 along with other real political prisoners. While here at Corcoran SHU, I found the men interested in discussing ways in which to correct their lives. Some were anxious to learn more about who they are as African men and Mexican and poor White men in a racist and unjust society, and they were articulate in discussing issues that affect them. And some, I teach the rules of the law: criminal and civil law so they will always know their rights.

Undue the wrong and release our falling comrades who have been falsely prosecuted, such as Mumia Abu-Jamal, Herman Bell, Ms Marilyn Buck, Assata Shakur, Geronimo Ji Jaga, George Jackson, Rev. Ben Chavis, Leonard Peltier, Steven Biko, Akil Al-Jundi, Che Guevara, Move 9, Ruchell Cingue Magee, Jonathan Jackson, Khatari, Hugo Pinell, Jay Jarvis, Kwame Turn none but Stokely Carmichael, Huey Newton,

Bobby Seale, Afeni Shakur, Kevin Cooper. But always remember, some of these comrades were murdered. Generally, they were preparing themselves to go back to their communities to help people to understand how racist and corrupt life in prison is and to motivate people to work together to change things within our communities and prisons.

When I first saw the large number of Black and Mexican men at each of these California state prisons I went to and here at Corcoran, I had emotions of anger and sadness, yet hope. There was anger because these men are being dehumanized by the prison environment. There was also sadness because many of these men, and also women, as a whole, will be confined at each of their prison facilities for many more years. Yet there was hope because I found these men here at Corcoran to be very intelligent, receptive and seriously contemplating making a new start in their lives once released. I was thankful as a political writer and political prisoner that I was welcomed in such a warm manner at each prison I went to, and that I was able to embrace them and interact with them.

I started off in 1982 within the CDC at Chino, CTF Soledad, Tehachapi, Vacaville, Old Folsom, New Folsom, and Corcoran. At each of these prisons I did work with each one who needed to better themselves. At first I was nervous when I stood up to speak some told me, but when I looked directly at each man I felt really comfortable being in the presence of my real African brothers who look like me, and I realized that it was only by the grace of the great creator that I am not confined amongst them but a few.

I learned from the men of color because they are very perceptive, very conscious and aware of what is happening in society. It is your very important that their mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, wives, sons, daughters friends become more supportive of the men in prison and become activity involved in encouraging churches and other organizations to stand behind these men and address the conditions in society that create criminal activity among the people. Throwing oppressed people into prison and then treating them with further brutality is not the answer. It only creates further problems for everyone as these same men usually return to our over burdened families and to our broken down communities when released. African and Mexican women in particular can become very instrumental in bringing about the change needed in society such that the African and Mexican men can again walk with dignity, confidence and self-respect.

My love and respect goes out to the men and women on Death Row, at Pelican Bay, Corcoran SHUs and CI.WF and to those in similar facilities across the nation. I wish them every success in transforming their mentality the way that Malcolm X and George Jackson did such that they will become the teachers of the future.

Welcome to the world of the reflections of a political prisoner within the United States federal and state prisons.



I learned from the men of color because they are very perceptive

LIL' SPANKS

Lil' Spanks has been on a tear of late, adding to the pages of The Beat in most of our most recent issues. In the following autobiographical poem, Lil' Spanks lets us into where his mind is at right now as he sits in Sacramento County Jail awaiting trial on new charges. We think there's much to be learned in this piece, and we know many of you will feel it as much as we do. We hope Lil' Spanks can keep up the torrid pace of submissions he's set, and we look forward to getting another piece from him soon.

I'm Still Here

Out on the street
I was hated the most
System's got me beat
Now considered a ghost
But
I gots to keep my head high
With my chin up
I know I'll be fine
Though I'm
A soldier who has taken a fall
When push come to shove I'm
against 'em all
That's why
I peep
The scene
And keep
My back towards the wall
And these walls . . .
Will break you if ya let 'em
So I say "Smile, crocodile"
And I do years
With a gang of my peers
But tears
I can't bring myself to shed 'em
Feel me?
'Cause vatos start creepin'
On the first sign of weakness
You'll see!
Check the scriptures
As they filter

And you'll see my name
Lil' Spanks
Is no longer an active player in this
game
I fell off and became a DO (dropout)
But that don't mean I'm working with
the COs
Most of these vatos my age
Is gonna learn harder then me
'Cause
Nowadays
Nobody's safe!
With or without the keys
Understand me?
There's so much to learn and so
much I know
Paying the dues
For who?
Man! I was a foo'
Climbing the stepping sones
I slipped up and gave the chance
To be stabbed in the back
But now I'm on my own
I find it better this way
Now that everybody's gone
Ain't no need to trip off these twisted
vatos
And they games that they play
But I'm still here!
With eternal souls clashin'
War gets deep

Some beef
Is everlastin'
Once upon a time . . .
I shut everybody's mouth
In a crowd
With just one round
And laughed
When I seen everyone scatter
From the burst of glass
As it all shattered
Thugs, guns, and drugs —
But love!
Is the only thing that truly mattered
If I could take it all back you know I
would
And erase all the twisted things
And all the evil deeds
I did for the 'hood
Now it's all bad
As I think back
To when I thought it was good
Trying to keep gruesome memories
a blur
And minimize them against what
they really were
Damn!
These mixed emotions
Rubbing in smoother than lotion
But never will destroy my devotions.
Never that!
While I'm still here . . .

KC The process of growing from baby to boy, from boy to man, can be a journey of pain that leaves its indelible mark on the soul and the brain. Defiantly, our former Beat colleague and sometimes contributor to these pages, KC, lays it on the line, as he tries to deal with the effects of the violence he's witnessed — and participated in — when he banged for a gang that was not there for him when he went to jail, and now wants him back. Without any advice from us, he says it best in two words: No More!

I Will Bang No More Forever

This is my life and so what
I came from China
I grew up in Sunset
Life was never easy
Always being ridiculed and picked on led me to start gangbanging
In Chinatown and ended almost dead till I realized this wasn't my destiny
Don't get me wrong
I represented to the fullest and I was down to ride to the end
Bang to the end
Shooting up till I empty my clips 9 mm in the left hand two grenades in my back pocket
while I'm flipping you off with my right hand
I was living high off not getting caught
Betrayal landed me empty handed and full of anger
Stupidity landed me in the room with the DA
Where were my friends when I was locked up running scared and away from me
After a month they wouldn't even visit me
Where was my friend when you knew the drugs wasn't mines, snitch
After all these years you all want me to still bang some more
I said "NO MORE"
You're all the ones who drove me insane
I have post-traumatic stress disorder
I need to see a psych-doc
WTF you all want me to do, go insane
Now I know you guys don't care about me
So I am going to stay the "f" away from you SOB's
Don't come at me wrong
You know I will still mess you up
I still don't back down and won't back down!
Leave me be let me enjoy my life while I still have it

**Leave
me be
let me
enjoy
my life
while
I still
have it**

MICHAEL MARKHASEV

It's been a minute since Michael Markhasev has graced the pages of *The Beat Without* with his wisdom. He returns here with a flourish that's unmistakably his — tasked with writing a book review of "A People's History of the United States," a book sent to him by a Beat staff member, Michael drops the following poetic manifesto to the author (Howard Zinn) and to all of us. It's wonderful to have Michael back in our pages. He writes from his personal monastery in the SHU at Corcoran State Prison.

Making History

Of making books there is no end,
And every scholar's pregnant with a story;
And as of late, this habit has become a trend —
With every Larry, Curly, Moe pursuing stripes of glory.
Yet glory sought in filling books is that of fools:
We dwell within a world where action rules,
Where ink and pen are only tools,
Where works — instead of words — become our fuels.

Behold, my friends, the trickery of history:
That veil in which our past is clouded in mystery.
As with our lives, it is a sum of contradictions:
Of failures and successes, achievements and afflictions.
Unlike a textbook, the picture isn't neat,
Nevertheless, it's quite a feat:
And, as we draw away the sheets,
We take in view our glories and defeats.

In name of progress and achievement
We've crisscrossed continents and oceans,
Partook in genocides, have sown bereavement —
While harvesting the fruits of "noble notions."
What to one race was exploration,
With fame and fortune being attained
Was to another devastation
Apocalypse and hell through exploitation.

O, there's money to be made!
For some it meant the sweating of their blood,
For others — resting in the shade,
Delighting in the slave parade
With brown and red and black on black —
With living cargo stacked on every deck
Manifest Destiny proceeded as directed,
Leaving a continent neglected and subjected.

But on the grassy side a mansion is erected
While justice is protracted —
With black and red and white partaking in the plight,
Slaving for pennies — never seeing light,
Yet putting up a fight.
Perhaps that's not "polite."
But when your kids are starved, it's not a pretty sight!
In fact, that ain't right. And so, you fight!

Like a bad dream when one is roused from sleep
One glance at history should cause each man to weep;
And almost disbelieve this monstrous abomination,
Obtained through blood and tears and frustration.
In struggle change is born,
But what of lives forever torn,
From whom the bell tolls not,
For whom no mourners mourn?

O precious land whose rivers flow with honey,
O land of liberty and of the free,
How could it be: A sight no eyes should see,
Where lives are less esteemed than paper money;
Where souls are sold for profits and for gains;
Where untold numbers groan beneath the chains,
While hopes are dashed and hearts travail in vain —
The weak are trampled, while the wicked reign!

As with our lives, our history's a mystery.
We are implanted on its fertile soil
And will be forced to reap the harvest of our toil.
Let no man think it as "us versus them"
For we ourselves are guilty of the things that we
condemn.
This is the story of ourselves; a messy, bloody scroll:
The die is cast for great and small,
So let the pieces fall where they will fall.

And that's not all.
Will you, my friend, be brave enough to heed the call?
As history is being made
Are you still napping in the shade?
Oblivious, drunk with the wine of blindness;
Indifferent to truth and loving kindness,
With madness on your mind, an empty soul —
A life without a purpose or a worthy goal . . .

You claim to know the truth, yet choose to live in
fiction,
Thinking that you'll receive a benediction
But in reality, you'll only reap affliction
And with your life you'll pay the price
For years filled with vanity and vice.
To change the world means more than "being nice" —
It means to be a living sacrifice:
The altar of success will not be kindled otherwise.

This is no easy task — the world's a mess.
It seems like every hill but ours has greener grass
So what of it? We'll grow on our own —
Retracing footprints of the past where light is shown,
Where men sought good for others, not their own,
The lived and died together, not alone.
Awake! The lines are drawn, this is no mystery:
Instead of writing books, let's pen our history!

A final note for those of us in prison:
Whom others have esteemed as "waste."
Let not the thickness of the walls hinder your vision,
Let not the cup of bitterness become your taste,
It's not about where you are, but who you are:
In skies of gloom and doom become the morning star
Let not the world your brightness mar,
But be you strong, be brave, and shine afar.

**Retracing footprints of the past where light is shown,
Where men sought good for others, not their own**

THE POETIC PRISONER

We hear a lot about sibling rivalry, so when we read of a brother's undying love for a brother, it is a deeply moving experience. Here, The Beat's Poetic Prisoner pours out his heart to his younger brother, desperately trying to keep him from falling into the pit of prison (or the Halls, or CYA). All we can do is to hope that love, so powerfully expressed, has its intended effect here. Knowing both brothers as we do, we are holding our collective breath. Due to space, we'll have more of The Poetic Prisoner in our next issue.

Time Stands Still

Are you a dream,
Or are you real?
I can't be feeling
As good as I feel.
When you hold me at your breast,
I feel more special than the rest.
And when I'm stressed,
You make me feel like the best.
Seeing you smile is like watching a rushing waterfall,
It always leaves me in awe.
And when you wear lingerie,
I can't help but drop my jaw.
Your touch makes me tingle,
If I have you, I'll never choose to be single.
Because no words can express how happy I get
When we let our bodies mingle.
I know I can be a bit stubborn,
But my love is always there.
And if another girl wanted my love,
I'd tell her I have none to spare.
You're the only lady on my mind,
The only one who gets my time.
You're the reason the words on this paper
Go so well together in rhyme.
I wake up and go to sleep
With the same thought in my head.
"I'm so lucky to have Arlene,
So I'm going to love her until I'm dead."
Take my life from me
Before you take my wife from me.
Without her my world's enveloped in darkness,
She makes my whole life sunny.
We work hard, but play even harder
Loving you is the cause, I am the martyr.
Let me kiss around your garter,
And if you like it, we can take it farther.
Or if not, we could have a deep conversation
Take a long walk with no destination.
Share memories with no hesitation,
And laugh until we have problems with our respiration.
Maybe you'll let my hands scan
Your body like Beat Within art pieces.
Let me penetrate your soul
Until all your love releases.
This may not be the best way
To explain how I feel.
All I know is that when I'm with you,
Time seems to stand still.

**If I was a pigeon,
All the ladies would
want my feathers.**

**when I'm stressed,
You make me feel
like the best.
Seeing you smile is like
watching
a rushing waterfall,
It always leaves me in awe.**

If I Was A Pigeon...

The other day I was overcome by my imagination
As I was looking out of the window in my kitchen.
Sitting on top of a fence
Was the ugliest most disgusting pigeon.
Then I ignored my judgments,
When his one legged girlfriend looked so sad.
But something else made me feel
Like being a pigeon wasn't so bad.
If I was a pigeon,
I could fly away from here.
I could hide within a tree,
And nobody would see me shed my tears.
I'd cross distant lands,
While the crisp air caresses my wings.
I'd wake up at the crack of dawn,
Open my beak, and start to sing.
If I was a pigeon, I'd kick it with the homies
On top of telephone poles.
Taking a trip to the sun
Would be on our list of goals.
We'd ride on those we didn't like,
And snatch all of their crumbs.
My albino homie Lil' Peezy
Got a loaded beak for those who wanna get dumb.
If I was a pigeon,
All the ladies would want my feathers.
They'd do anything to have me forever,
But this pigeon has skies to fly,
We don't have time to be together.
My homie is in the pen,
He just got six months to life.
He got charged for pecking someone's eye out
Because they tried to cut him with a knife.
If I was a pigeon,
I'd go to Marine World and have a family reunion.
We'd fly to the park
And wait for the old man and his seed distribution.
I listed everything I'd do,
But the last one may start a fight.
Because if I was a pigeon,
I'd shhh on everybody I didn't like.

NICOLE BRADLEY AND KYMI

First, we owe Nicole Bradley aka Sunflower (and her friend Kymi)

an apology for the length of time it has taken us to print her wonderful pieces about family, freedom, friends — and prison. Sometimes, we just get behind the 8-Ball, and it takes us a while to get up to speed. Second, we want to say that the nickname she goes by, Sunflower, suits her upbeat, forward-looking personality — bright, open, full of promise and looking up — and yet tinged with the sadness that goes with being enslaved by prison! Nicole and Kymi write us from their temporary “home” at Central California Women’s Facility in Chowchilla. Due to space, we’ll have more of Nicole and Kymi in our next issue.

Dear Beat

I’m just sitting in my little cell, looking out my tiny window. It’s painted white. If I look hard enough, I can still see the little yard and the people in red. They keep you in handcuffs all the way up until you reach the gates of the yard, which is nothing but a brick-walled cage with barbed wire on the fence.

I have a roommate. Her name is Kymi. Thankfully, we know each other. It makes it a bit easier when you know the person. I knew my last roommate, too. But they transferred her out of here.

As for me, I don’t know where I’m going. We have people that try to manipulate the system. Yet, I’m the one that ends up suffering for the games that they play. My parents are so devastated because they want to send me to a far away place. My mom called up here crying because this is all too hard for her to deal with. I always try to shield my mom from the bad things that happen to me in here. But, this is one thing I can’t hide from her.

As for my dad, he’s usually a strong person even though he has cancer. But I see this is breaking him down too. I love my family. And it hurts me to see them in pain. Right now I am going through a mixture of emotions. I am hurting for my family. I’m also hurting for the loss of a loved one, whom I considered my other half! And I feel anger towards the one that split us up and put me in this mess. My whole world was turned upside down because of one person. And, a part of me wants to get revenge for what she has done.

But I have changed. My hair is healthy. I’ve gained weight, and I’ve grown up some. I used to be this underweight little girl full of stress, full of problems. And I had this “I don’t care” attitude, ready to beat up anyone I had a problem with. But I’m a woman now, not a child. And I just wish that my other half could see this and forgive me.

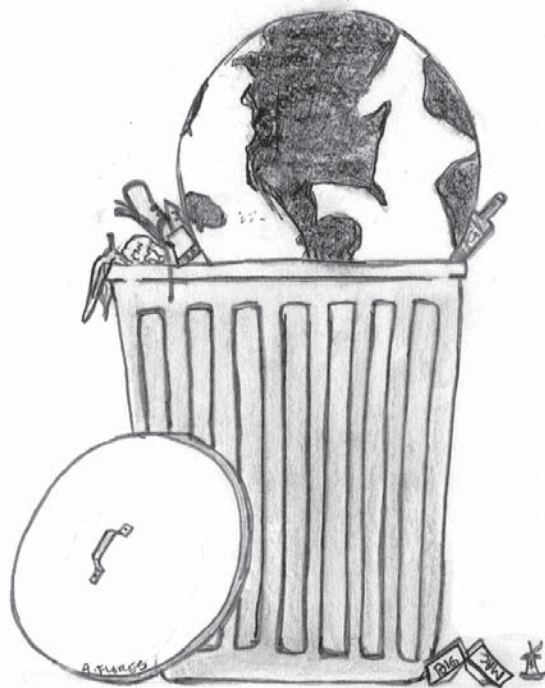
I just want my world back together in one piece. I want this heartache to go away. And I want to see my family happy. Soon I will be out of this miserable place. I truly believe that some type of miracle will happen in my life, and God will let me go home, even if nothing else works out, I have this to look forward to. I just need to be strong.

I had this “I don’t care” attitude, ready to beat up anyone I had a problem with. But I’m a woman now, not a child.

This is a terrible situation When this nation Has met condemnation

Stupid Girls

They argue, yell, and get irate
Stupid girls try to complicate
People’s lives and try to intimidate
All those that can’t relate
They give themselves a bad reputation
Putting on too much foundation
Going overboard with their infatuation
In prison thinking they’re on vacation
Their behaviors are ugly, they always criticize
Steal their man — then they’ll pulverize
They will not compromise
Beware their fatal eyes
Don’t try to stipulate
Their hearts are full of hate
Then you’ll meet your fate
And your arm they’ll dislocate
What’s wrong with this generation
This is a terrible situation
When this nation
Has met condemnation
Its people agonize
Over those we antagonize
You skills you should utilize
So your knowledge won’t vaporize
Your mistakes you duplicate
Your stories you corroborate
Your contraband they confiscate
Your parole date they exterminate
Stupid girls, look in your reflection
At your ugly complexion
You have a sour disposition
And have no appreciation
Your bed — it’s no queen size
Stop trying to chase all the guys
All you do is publicize
The wrong crowd you socialize
Maybe if you were to anticipate
How you want to rehabilitate
And try to conciliate
Instead of trying to aggravate
Then you can be under consideration
For graduation
And reach past the limitation
Of a prisoner’s expectation



Where is the world going with all
this war and violence ?